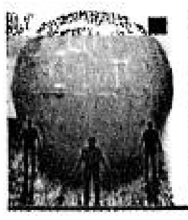


■ Infotech / B16

Internet marks 10th year in RP today

■ Sports / A25

Parica gains US Super Billiards finals

■ Business / B9

Prospects of sugar industry getting brighter

■ Lifestyle / F1

The Passion according to 'sinakulo'

Tanong ng Bayan / A22

Maari bang ipagtanggol ang Maynilad deal?

NGAYONG ALAS-10 NG GABI

INQ TV

Camile's real, Jasmine's sweet, says losing finalist

By Janet Susan R. Nepales
LA Correspondent

LOS ANGELES—"Camile is a real person. Whatever you see on TV is what she is in real life. She's a great girl, your R&B Hawaiian girl. She is more rugged than Jasmine, (who is) our little sweetheart. Jasmine's your sweet little

CAMILE/ A19

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Dolphy twits GMA for feigning ignorance

By Carlito Pablo

'DI RAW NIYA ALAM KUNG BAKIT MASISIBAK ANG AKING SHOW!

CEBU CITY—With his virtual "home" secure for now, Dolphy returned to the campaign trail with a vengeance, taking on no less than President Maca-

DOLPHY/ A19

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph

Monday, March 29, 2004 ★★ 86 pages / 9 sections / vol. 19 / no. 112 P18

website: www.inq7.net

₱15-B take of Maynilad hit

Senate bet says firm didn't remit collections

By Michael Lim Ubac

HINIGARAN, Negros Occidental—Malacañang is pushing for the takeover of Maynilad Water Services from the Lopezes to cover up the failure of the utility firm to remit to the government between P10 billion and P15 billion that it had collected from consumers over the past three years, according to a senatorial candidate of the Alyansa ng Pag-asa.

Melanio "Batas" Mauricio said here yesterday that the amount represented the foreign currency differential adjustment (FCDA), the accelerated extraordinary price adjustment (AEPA) and the payment by consumers of P19.92 per cubic meter that should have been passed on to the state-run Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System to service its old debts.

Maynilad assumed most of the debts of the MWSS when it won the 25-year concession to distribute water in the west zone of Metro Manila in 1997. The other debts were assumed by Manila Water Co. of the Ayalas, which won the concession to distribute water in the east zone of the metropolis.

Mauricio, a lawyer, said computations showed that the collections amounted to at least P5 billion a year.

"It is not clear why the MWSS has not been demanding the remittance of the aforementioned collections. This appears to be the

P15-B TAKE/ A19

BRIG. Gen. Zulkifli bin Zain (right), head of the Malaysian monitoring team, and Lt. Gen. Rodolfo Garcia, Army vice chief of staff, walk past a group of MILF rebels during a visit to Camp Darapanan in Maguindanao.

REUTERS

Malaysian peace team visits MILF stronghold

CAMP DARAPAN, Maguindanao—To shouts of "God is great!" Malaysian observers visited a major Moro rebel base in Mindanao at the weekend, aiming to shore up a fragile ceasefire ahead of the resumption of peace talks.

A 12-man survey team of diplomats, soldiers and a police officer is touring several camps of the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), paving the way for a larger force of neutral observers.

Disputes over ceasefire terms have occasionally boiled over into fighting, and the deployment of observers from Malaysia and other Muslim nations was one of the pre-conditions set for the resumption of formal peace talks in Kuala Lumpur next month.

"The coming of the international monitoring team here is a big step toward achieving peace in Mindanao," said Sammy al Mansoor Gambar, the MILF's military commander.

With $30 million in US development aid promised to MILF areas once a peace settlement is reached, hopes are at their highest in three years that the two sides can make progress in ending a three-decade conflict that has killed 120,000 people and strangled resource-rich Mindanao's potential.

Skeptics question whether the MILF's demand for self-determination for Mindanao's 5 million Muslims can ever be squared with the government's refusal to consider any threat to the majori-

MALAYSIAN/ A21

Marcos, Estrada in hall of infamy warning to voters

By Amando Doronila

TWO DEPOSED Filipino presidents stand tall in the list of the world's 10 most corrupt leaders in the 2004 Global Corruption Report of the Berlin-based Transparency International (TI). Ferdinand Marcos placed second to the topnotcher, former President Suharto of Indonesia; Joseph Estrada ranked 10th.

ANALYSIS

The three share the company in the hall of infamy of such notorious and deposed leaders as Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire, Sani Abacha of Nigeria, Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia, Jean-Claude Duvalier of Haiti and Alberto Fujimori of Peru.

The TI issues a yearly corruption report that makes indices of the most corrupt and least corrupt countries of the world. In last

MARCOS/ A19

NPA 'graduates' keep red flag flying

YOUNG recruits of the communist New People's Army, which is celebrating its 35th founding anniversary today, hold a military drill in their jungle hideout somewhere in Mindanao.

REUTERS

LIANGA, Surigao del Sur—Hidden under a lush canopy of trees in Mindanao, a group of excited youngsters prepares for their graduation ceremony.

There will be no caps and gowns, but the graduates are assured of jobs—attacking town halls and police stations and ambushing military patrols across sprawling Mindanao as the latest recruits to the world's most resilient communist insurgency.

They will also demand money from mining companies and plantations and run "political education" classes in remote villages, adding to a growing national security headache for the government as the May 10 national elections approach.

On the eve of its 35th founding anniversary and with the national police on heightened alert, the New People's Army

NPA/ A21

THE CHARM OFFENSIVE ELECTION 2004

Preacher spreads Good Word

Editor's Note: The Inquirer continues a series of essays on the campaign style and impact of the five presidential candidates, a two-parter for each in alphabetical order.

By Elvira Mata
Desk Editor

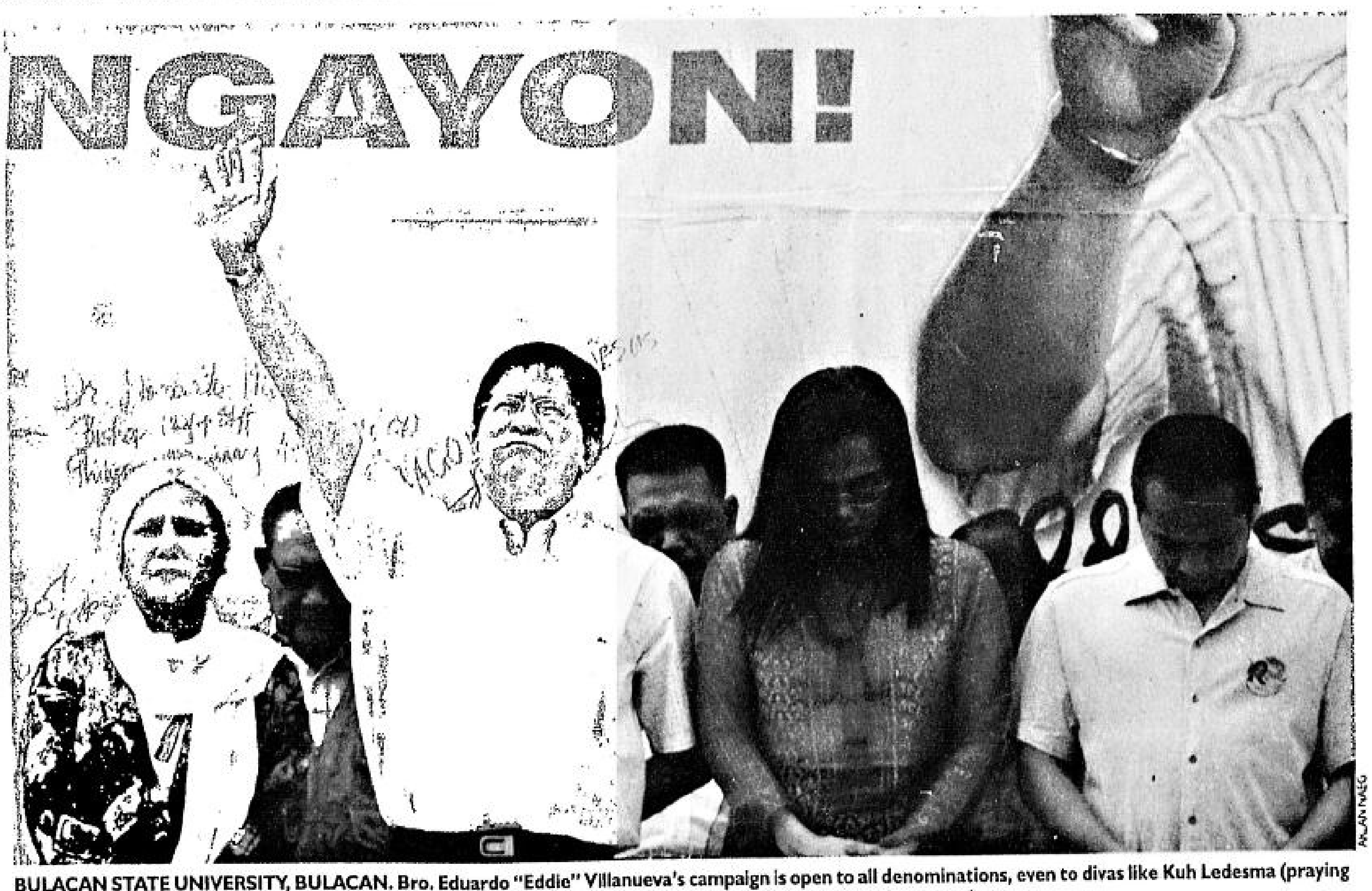
(First of two parts)

EVERY WEDNESDAY until May 10, businessman Philip Sanvictores and wife Pat hold a "Bangon Breakfast" forum in a function room of Club Filipino in San Juan, Metro Manila. There they invite Chinkee Tan, a multi-level-marketing trainer/presenter extraordinaire to make a presentation on why people should vote for Bro. Eduardo "Eddie" Villanueva for president.

Neither Tan nor the Sanvictores family are members of the Jesus is Lord Church Worldwide, of which Villanueva is founder and former president. Philip Sanvictores is with The Word Community Church while Tan is a member of the Victory Christian Fellowship.

They are born-again Christians and they are tired of how the country has been run to

PREACHER/ A20



BULACAN STATE UNIVERSITY, BULACAN. Bro. Eduardo "Eddie" Villanueva's campaign is open to all denominations, even to divas like Kuh Ledesma (praying at the presidential candidate's left). It does not accept donations from drug lords, gambling lords and business empires.

ARLAN NAEG

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
MONDAY, MARCH 29, 2004

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: The whole country will experience partly cloudy to at times cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms mostly over Mindanao.

SOURCE: PAGASA

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Partly Cloudy
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Partly Cloudy
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Partly Cloudy

Red alert for transport strike

By Christian V. Esguerra, Edson Tandoc jr., Gil Cabacungan Jr. and Margaux Ortiz

THE MILITARY and police in Metro Manila, Central Luzon and in the Calabarzon areas have been placed on red alert to prevent violence in the wake of the planned three-day nationwide strike by public transport groups starting today.

This would be the third time this month that public transport groups had threatened to go on strike to press their demand for a P1 provisional fare increase and a rollback in oil prices. The government had succeeded in aborting the first two plans.

In Metro Manila, police will deploy a total of 67 "arresting teams" all over the metropolis to accost unruly strikers who might scatter spikes, obstruct traffic, destroy property or force other drivers to join the strike.

Armed Forces chief of staff Gen. Narciso Abaya yesterday directed all military units in Metro Manila to implement "Oplan Libreng Sakay" to provide free transportation to stranded commuters.

In Central Luzon and the Calabarzon, around 300 anti-riot officers will be deployed in each area.

PNP director for operations Avelino Razon Jr. warned that drivers who will coerce their fellow drivers into joining the strike will be arrested. "They should also respect the right of other drivers to ply their routes," he said.

Director Ricardo de Leon, National Capital Region Police Office chief, said police would monitor the situation in Northern and Southern Metro Manila. Around 5,000 anti-riot police from the NCRPO will maintain order in the streets.

Jeepney organizations all over the country including the Pinagkaisang Samahan ng mga Tsuper at Opereytors Nationwide (Piston) Inc., the Philippine Confederation of Drivers Organization-Alliance of Concerned Transportation Operators (PCDO-Acto), Federation of Jeepney Operators and Drivers Association of the Philippines, National Transport Union, Makati Jeepney Operators and Drivers Association of the Philippines and the Alliance of Transport Operators and Drivers Association are set to join the strike.

The groups have joined forces and called their alliance "Task Force Pisong Dagdag Pasahe."

Piston president Mar Garvida told the INQUIRER yesterday that unless the government approved their demand for a P1 provisional fare hike, the strike would push through.

He added that the only way to stop the strike was for the government to grant the fare increase and announce it today.

Garvida also wants a rollback in diesel prices from P17.90 to P15.

He said the strike aims to paralyze 100 percent of jeepney transport in Metro Manila and in other key cities.

Since 2001

Jeepney organizations have been pushing for a P1.50 fare increase since 2001 and a P1 provisional fare increase while waiting for the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board's decision on their main petition.

Transportation and Communication Secretary Leandro Mendoza, however, had ruled out the granting of any fare increase until after the May elections.

"This is not an issue of politics. This is an issue of survival," Vigor Mendoza, lawyer for jeepney groups, told the INQUIRER yesterday.

The Jeepney organizations arrived at the decision to strike during a two-day summit in Baguio City which ended yesterday.

But LTFRB chair Ma. Elena Bautista yesterday said she was not aware of the planned strike. "I have not yet officially heard from them," Bautista said.

In a dialogue on March 5, the government promised a P1 discount in diesel prices nationwide, thus aborting a scheduled March 8 strike. But the discount was later decried as "ineffective" since only a few gas stations offered it and some were in remote areas.

Bus operators, however, will not join the three-day strike, Integrated Metro Bus Operators Association chair Claire de la Fuente told the INQUIRER yesterday.

But Malacañang expects the nationwide transport strike to fizzle out because of lack of support from "moderate" operators and drivers' groups.

Presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye told RMN radio the strike would be confined only to a "small group." *With reports from Allan Macatuno and Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk; Desiree Caluza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau; Carla P. Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau; Romulo O. Ponte and Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

'Ombudsman may probe but not charge GMA'

Christine O. Avendaño and Gil Cabacungan Jr.

THE OFFICE of the Ombudsman can investigate the disqualification cases filed against President Macapagal-Arroyo but it cannot file a case against her, administration Sen. Francis Pangilinan said yesterday.

"It may investigate but it may not file a case based on its findings. The proper remedy to remove a sitting President is by way of impeachment," Pangilinan told the INQUIRER.

Pangilinan, a lawyer, was asked to react on Assistant Ombudsman Ernesto Nocos' statement the other day that the Office of the Ombudsman planned to investigate and evaluate the disqualification cases filed against Ms Macapagal.

Nocos said that while the President was immune from suit, this did not stop the Ombudsman's office from investigating on the cases to see if they would lead to an impeachment complaint.

Pangilinan said the Ombudsman "can, even without a complaint, initiate its own investigation."

The senator believed the disqualification cases filed against the President were "politically motivated."

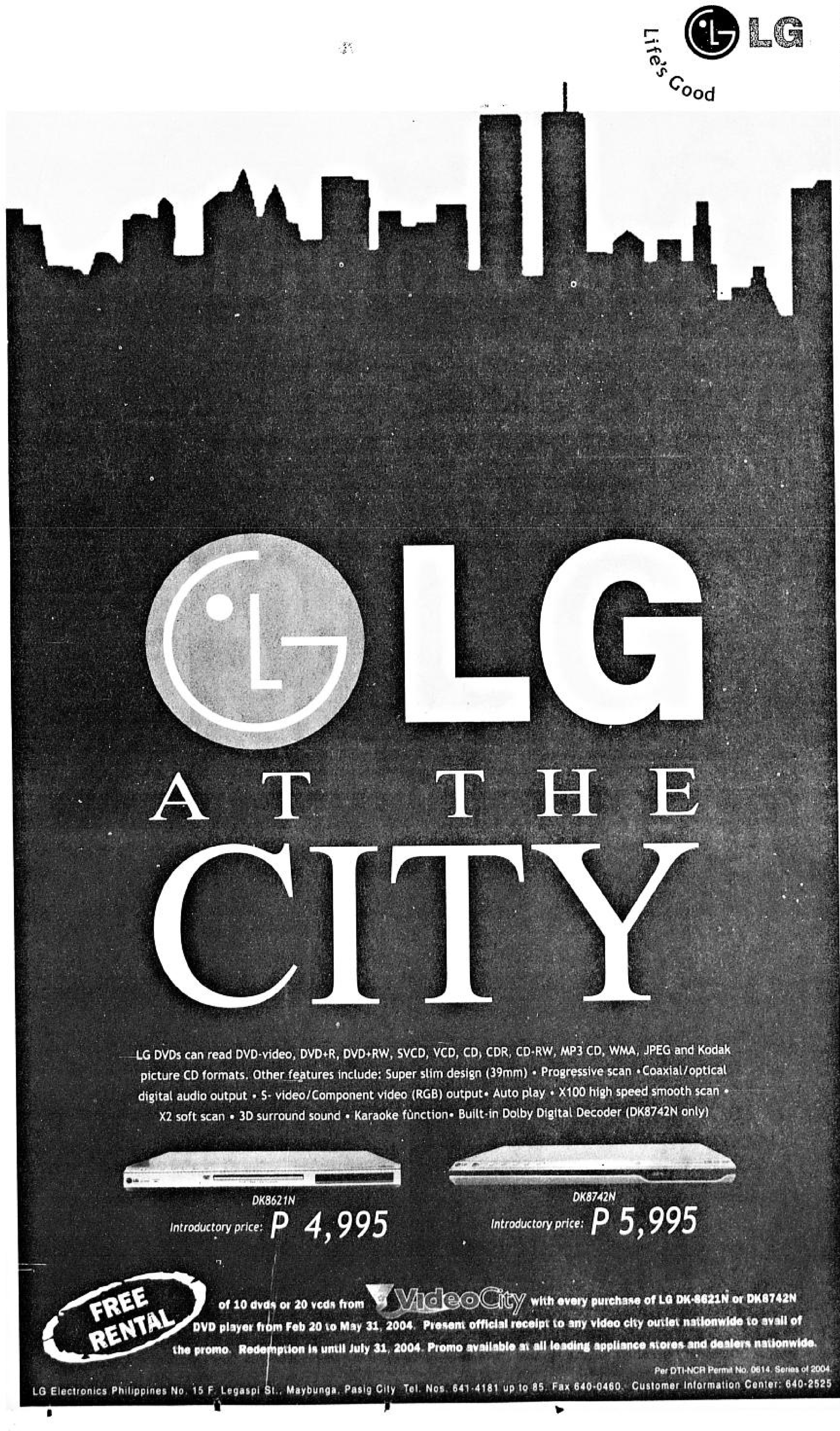
"It's election season so disqualification cases are a dime a dozen," he said.

Opposition reelectionist Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. voiced "grave doubts" on whether the Ombudsman had jurisdiction over the disqualification cases of the President.

He said that normally, it was the Commission on Elections that had jurisdiction over disqualification cases against candidates. The Ombudsman, Pimentel said, has jurisdiction on administrative and criminal matters.

Meanwhile, the President will not sign the covenant asking public officials seeking reelection not to use public funds in their campaigns.

Presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye, in a radio interview over RMN, said the covenant was based on "a wrong premise" that Ms Macapagal was taking advantage of her position to push her election bid. He said the covenant and the court suits faced by the President were forms of harassment by the opposition.



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Albert, Powell discuss security, telecoms row

By Jerome Aning

FOREIGN Affairs Secretary Delia Albert and US Secretary of State Colin Powell discussed continuing cooperation in defense and security, peace in Mindanao and the row between Filipino and American telecommunication firms during their meeting on Friday in Washington DC.

In a statement, the Department of Foreign Affairs said Albert and Powell both conveyed their sympathies to the Spanish people over the Madrid train bombings. Both also agreed on the importance of continuing international solidarity against terrorism.

For her part, the DFA chief said the Philippines would seek intensified bilateral cooperation to enhance the counterterrorism capabilities of Filipino law enforcement agencies.

Albert also thanked Powell for US support in the peace process in Mindanao.

She reassured her American counterpart the peace talks with the secessionist Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the communist National Democratic Front remained firmly on track.

She also raised "serious concerns" over the ongoing investigation of Philippine telecommunications companies for possible violations of US anti-trust laws.

Powell replied the State Department would convey the Philippines' concerns to the US Department of Justice.

The controversy was sparked by American authorities' serving of subpoenas to about 30 Filipino telecom executives attending a regional conference in Hawaii in January. US telecom firms had accused the Filipino companies of charging illegal termination rates, which they said was a violation of US anti-trust laws.

Powell thanked Albert for the strong Philippine cooperation in the US-led war against terrorism. Both "noted with appreciation" the closer defense partnership between their countries.

Powell informed Albert the used helicopters promised by the US to the Philippines were being prepared for transfer.

PMA stopping cadets from voting, says Ping

By Norman Bordadora and Vincent Cabreza, *PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

BAGUIO CITY—Upperclassmen of the Philippine Military Academy will not be able to vote in the May elections after they were barred by PMA officials from registering as voters during the registration period last year, presidential candidate Sen. Panfilo "Ping" Lacson said yesterday.

Lacson said PMA superintendent Maj. Gen. Edilberto Adan only allowed the plebes, or freshmen cadets and cadettes, to be shuttled to the registration precincts in this city during the extended registration period in 2003.

"A cadet can't leave Fort del Pilar unless they are on official business. A bus takes them in groups, otherwise they don't have the opportunity to register," said Lacson.

"The plebes are the most obedient of the cadet corps. They are the ones who say, 'yes sir,'" Lacson said.

Lacson said a second-class cadet, who is on leave, gave him the information that only the plebes or fourth class (freshmen) cadets were allowed to register.

Adan, however, dismissed Lacson's "political statement" as a lie. "We want the cadets to vote," Adan told the INQUIRER in a telephone interview.

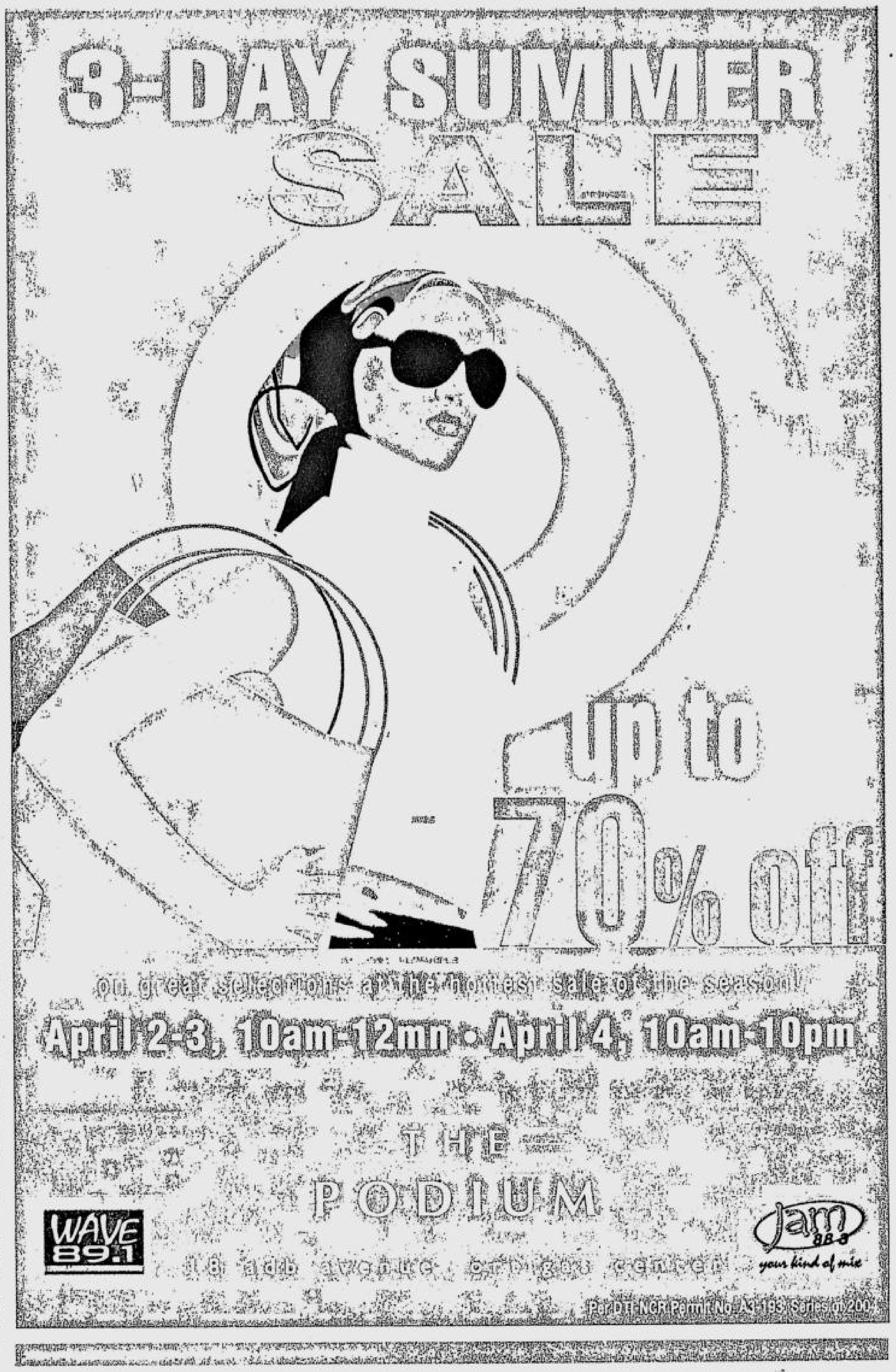
Adan said the PMA took pains to ask cadets to go to the Commission on Elections last year to beat the deadline for the registration of new voters, and for validating old voters' entries.

"We encouraged (the cadets) to register," Adan said, adding that the cadets were cleared to go to the Comelec office in Baguio only when their academic and training schedules permitted them.

Adan said a few cadets could have failed to register because of their schedules.

"I do not know (how many ended up) registering at the Comelec," he said.

Lacson said that while the number of cadets and cadettes who were allegedly disenfranchised by Adan's supposed directive was small compared to the total voting population of Baguio City, they were still among the future leaders of the country.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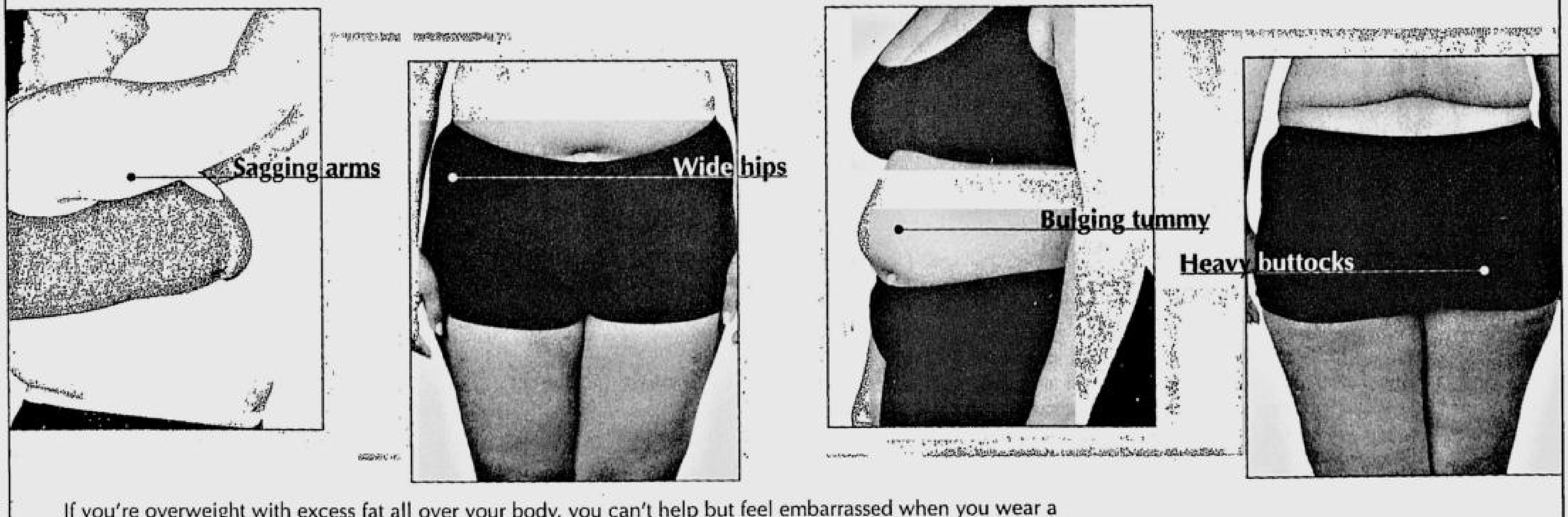

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Solon: Politics threatening Bukidnon poverty plan

By Cynthia D. Balana

A HIGHLY successful Bangladeshi-inspired poverty alleviation program for poor women in Bukidnon is being threatened by the intense political rivalry between the Zubiri and Acosta families in the province.

Called Grameen banking, the lending program was initiated by the Acosta family to address the credit needs of poor women in Mindanao. It was patterned after the Grameen lending program of Bangladesh.

Rep. Nereus "Neric" Acosta of the first district of Bukidnon blamed his political opponents, particularly Bukidnon Gov. Jose Zubiri, for the recent adverse reports against Bukidnon Integrated Network of Home Industries (BINHI) and the Bukidnon Vegetable Producers Cooperative (BVPC), both engaged in rural microfinance and the conduits of the program.

"This Grameen banking was scoffed at by our political opponents, particularly the Zubiris, as rather quixotic but when they saw its success, they wanted to destroy it," Acosta said.

BINHI and BVPC were established by Nereus' mother, Mayor Socorro Acosta, a former congresswoman. Six family members and relatives were trained in the Grameen system in Bangladesh. Grameen is the Bengali word for village.

Acosta, a doctorate degree holder from a US university and a professor at the Ateneo de Manila, said Grameen focused on women because its Bangladeshi founder believed that money invested in women would most likely go to real needs, not vices.

BINHI was registered in 1989 with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). Since 1990, it has lent P898,000 without collateral to 772 women in the towns of Sumilao, Manolo Fortich, Malitbog and Talakag.

Under the program, each member can borrow from P1,000 to P10,000 for livelihood projects such as hog-raising, sari-sari stores, food processing, agricultural development projects and even ukay-ukay.

Good borrowers can borrow as much as P50,000 with interest rates of 2.5 percent per month. The program boasts of 97 to 98 percent repayment rate.

The program is funded by the Dutch Rural Development Assistance Program, the Agricultural Credit and Policy Council, the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Agriculture.

Acosta pointed out that both BINHI and BVPC now have independent boards of trustees and were no longer "family-controlled."

He admitted extending P5.5 million, not P10.5 million as earlier reported, from his pork barrel as assistance to women members.

A graft case has been filed against Acosta before the Ombudsman for his alleged misuse of his pork barrel funds.

FPJ says Cebuano taught him to box

By Carlito Pablo

CEBU CITY—Opposition presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. didn't make motherhood statements or criticize the administration during his campaign sortie here on Saturday.

In an effort to "connect" with Cebuanos who are said to be supportive of President Macapagal-Arroyo, Poe talked about an old Cebuano boxer named Ben Escalante who was known during his fighting days as Small Lino.

Addressing the grand rally of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino, Poe said the "most important" event of his early movie career was when he met Escalante.

"When I was making (the movie) Lo Waist Gang, he (Escalante) taught me the fundamentals of boxing," Poe said.

Thanks to a Cebuano, Poe's punching techniques made him famous in the movies. "I owe him (Escalante) a debt of gratitude," he added.

The movie actor talked about Escalante to make a point. "Keep on punching. Don't give up," he told his audience.

Poe added that this was also the story of his life. He was 12 when his father died and the family lost everything. "We lost our palatial house. There were no drivers to bring me to school," he said.

Poe dropped out of high school to take on odd jobs until he became a stuntman, his entry into the movies. He said: "I want the youth to see that whatever happens to their lives, they should be able to serve God and country."

While Poe kept punching up stories like this to the crowd, about 500 people started to leave the Cebu City Sports Stadium where the KNP rally was held.

There was no official explanation why they left. "They could have been planted by the other side," said Poe's running mate Sen. Loren Legarda. "It doesn't make sense for them to leave after they waited for hours." There were about 6,000 people in the stadium.

"It's (also) possible that they came from a far away place and they wanted to make the last trip home," Legarda said.

And for the first time since the campaign period started on Feb. 10, Poe was joined by his wife Susan Roces, an Ilongga.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Monday, March 29, 2004
5th Week of Lent

1st Reading: Dn 13:41-62
Gospel: Jn 8:12-20

Jesus said to the Jews, "I am the Light of the world; the one who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have light and life." The Pharisees replied, "Now you are speaking on your own behalf, your testimony is worthless."

Then Jesus said, "Even though I bear witness to myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I have come from and where I am going. But you do not know where I came from or where I am going.

You judge by human standards; as for me, I don't judge anyone. But if I had to judge, my judgment would be valid for I am not alone: the Father who sent me is with me. In your Law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is valid; so I am bearing witness to myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness to me."

They asked him, "Where is your Father?" Jesus answered, "You don't know me or my Father; if you knew me, you would know my Father as well."

Jesus said these things when he was teaching in the Temple area, in the place where they received the offerings. No one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.

Commentary

The atmosphere of a law-court hangs around the readings for the next few days. Jesus is being pushed on the question of "testimony." For a claim to stand, there had to be at least two witnesses. But Jesus was calling no witnesses to support his own claims; so they said, "Your testimony (evidence) is worthless."

Jesus replied, "My testimony is true because I know where I have come from and where I am going." He is his own testimony, or rather he and his Father. He does not rely on other people agreeing with him. Nietzsche said about society, "Where there are four of you a fifth must die." Jesus had not come to start another small movement of like-minded people, but to bring a new thing into existence. The old is evidence only for the old; the new thing is its own evidence.

If you have something new to say, just say it and let it stand on its own feet (or fall!); or something new to do, just do it. The more you try to justify it, the more you destroy its newness.

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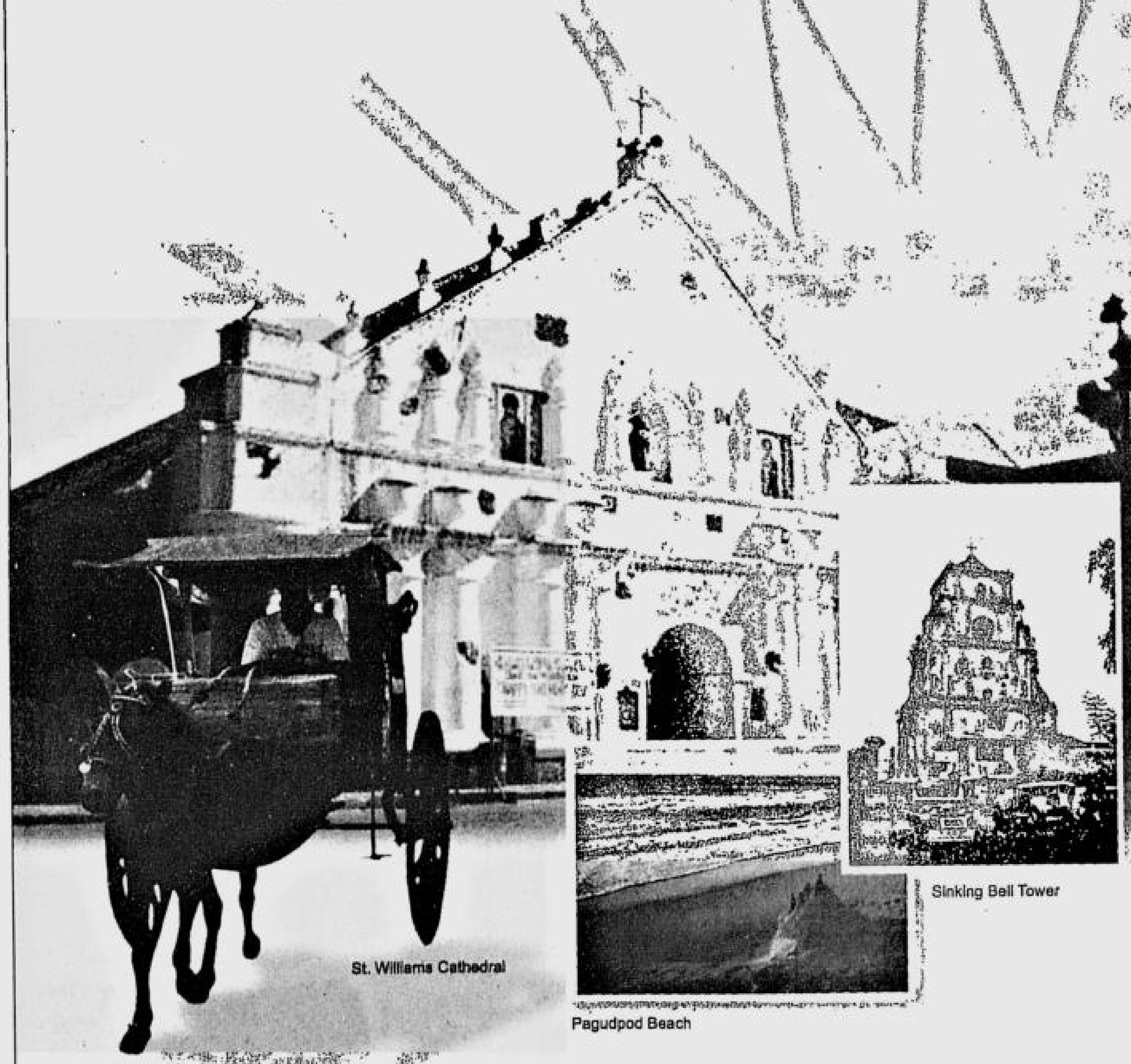

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Anniversary Text Raffle

Promo period: March 29 - June 29, 2004

More than P3.5MILLION in cash prizes to be given away in the daily and monthly draws

Plus! 59 winners of Mercury Drug Gift Certificates worth P1,000.00 each

Plus! 30 winners of Nokia Mobile Phones

MERCURY JOIN
Juan Cruz*8
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Quezon City

Text MERCURY<space>JOIN <space>NAME*ADDRESS and send to 2205

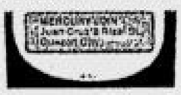
ACCESS NUMBER 2205 FOR GLOBE, SMART, TALK N' TEXT AND TOUCH MOBILE SUBSCRIBERS

TEXT RAFFLE PROMO MECHANICS:

1. The raffle promotion is open to all Mercury Drug customers with a minimum over-the-counter purchase of P100.00. Over-the-counter purchases must be made in cash or credit card payments only between March 29 - June 29, 2004. Purchases made under charge account are not qualified to join the raffle. Only a maximum purchase of P 100,000.00 shall be credited raffle entries. Purchases made before March 29, 2004 and after June 29, 2004 are not qualified to join the raffle promotion. For every P 100.00 purchase, customer will get 1 raffle entry.

2. Raffle entries are accumulation of raffle numbers acquired by a customer. Raffle numbers will be automatically generated by the system and stored in a secure database, which can only be accessed by a Mercury Drug authorized representative, system administrator and a DOH-BFAD representative. A raffle number is assigned for every P 100.00 purchase. Over P 100.00 increments will not be carried over to the next purchase and will be discarded.

3. To be able to qualify in the raffle promotion, customer must first register by sending a text message with the keyword MERCURY JOIN NAME*ADDRESS and send it to only one access number 2205 for Globe, Touch Mobile, Smart or Talk n Text subscribers. Registration via SMS or text messaging using the keyword "MERCURY JOIN" is free and will not be charged by the telephone companies. Customer need only register once.
SAMPLE TEXT MESSAGE:



4. After sending the registration message, the system will reply with a text message informing the customer that his/her registration was successful, a short instruction on how to enter raffle entries and a free item coupon which they can claim in any Mercury Drug store. Customer must present the text message reply to any Mercury Drug store to claim the free item.

The Free Item Coupon for:

Month	Product	Quantity
March 29 - April 29	Alaxan FR	1 Capsule
April 30 - May 29	Enervon Tab	1 Tablet
May 30 - June 29	PH Care Sachet or Celeteque Sachet	1 Sachet

5. After the registration, the customer will be qualified to join the raffle promotion. For every over-the-counter purchase, the customer is issued a tape receipt bearing the Mercury Drug branch name i.e. Mercury Drug Acropolis and total amount purchased. After the purchase, the customer may join the raffle promotion by sending a text message with the keyword MERCURY RAFFLE BRANCH NAME*TOTAL AMOUNT PURCHASED to 2205. Every time a customer sends this information to 2205, they will be charged P 2.00 for post paid subscribers and P 2.50 for pre-paid subscribers.
SAMPLE TEXT MESSAGE:

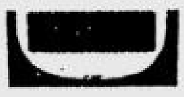
MERCURY RAFFLE
ACROPOLIS*

6. After sending the text message above, the customer will receive a reply text message from 2205. The reply text message with the number of raffle entries must come ONLY from the access number 2205. This will serve to confirm the total number of raffle entries the customer earned. Also, the reply text message will confirm that the customer entered the correct information (branch name and/or amount of purchase) indicated in the tape receipt.

7. If upon receiving the reply text message, the customer realizes that he/she has entered a wrong information (branch name and/or amount purchased) as indicated on the tape receipt. Customer has a chance to correct the text message by sending another text message with the keyword MERCURY VOID to 2205. This will make the last text message sent by the customer invalid. Customer must re-send another text message with the correct information as specified in instruction no. 5. Customer will be charged P 2.00 for post paid subscribers and P 2.50 for pre-paid subscribers for this service.
SAMPLE TEXT MESSAGE:

If customer wins the raffle without correcting his/her wrong entry, customer is automatically disqualified from winning the prize. It is important to enter the correct information as indicated in the tape receipt.

8. To inquire about the promo mechanics, prizes or any other information about the raffle, just send a text message with the keyword MERCURY HELP to 2205. Every time a customer requests for this information to 2205, they will be charged P 2.00 for post paid subscribers and P 2.50 for pre-paid subscribers.
SAMPLE TEXT MESSAGE:



9. To inquire about the total raffle entries earned by a customer, just send a text message with the keyword MERCURY POINTS to 2205. Every time a customer requests for this information to 2205, they will be charged P 2.00 for post paid subscribers and P 2.50 for pre-paid subscribers.
SAMPLE TEXT MESSAGE:

10. Raffle draws will be conducted with the presence of a DOH-BFAD representative. Daily prize winners will be drawn weekly while the Minor and Major prize winners will be drawn monthly. The 59 Consolation prize winners (taken from all raffle entries with numerical ending No. 59) will be conducted on the last monthly draw. The system will generate random winners from the secured database.

11. When a customer wins the raffle, he/she will be informed through any of the following types of communication: text message, by mail, telephone call and/or print advertisements in leading newspapers.

12 .Winners of the raffle promotion MUST present the tape receipt of his winning entry and a valid identification card (Driver's License, Passport, SSS I.D., etc.) It is important that all tape receipts from March 29 - June 29, 2004 are kept until the final raffle draw. Winners must also present the mobile phone they used to send their raffle entries including the correct SIM card.

13. If the customer fails to win in the daily prizes, he/she still has chances to win in the minor and major prizes. If a customer wins in the draw for the minor and major prizes, the customer will be given the prize of the greater value. Winners of the daily draw are still qualified to win in the other daily and monthly draws. A customer can only win once in the major prize drawn every month.

14. Prizes:

Major Prizes :

	WINNERS	PRIZES
Month 1	1	P 200,000.00 Tax Free
Month 2	1	P 300,000.00 Tax Free
Month 3	1	P 500,000.00 Tax Free

Minor Prizes:

15	Daily Winners	P 2,000.00 Tax Free

Consolation Prize:

30 Winners	Nokia 3100 Mobile Phones
59 Winners	Mercury Drug Gift Certificate worth P 1,000.00

15. Raffle Draws will be made on these dates in the presence of a DOH-BFAD representative.

15.1 For Daily Draws:

April 5, 2004 - For Daily Winners of March 29-April 4, 2004
April 19, 2004 - For Daily Winners of April 12-18, 2004
April 26, 2004 - For Daily Winners of April 19-25, 2004
May 3, 2004 - For Daily Winners of April 26-May 2, 2004
May 10, 2004 - For Daily Winners of May 3–9, 2004
May 17, 2004 - For Daily Winners of May 10-16, 2004
May 24, 2004 - For Daily Winners of May 17-23, 2004
May 31, 2004 - For Daily Winners of May 24-30, 2004
June 7, 2004 - For Daily Winners of May 31-June 6, 2004
June 14, 2004 - For Daily Winners of June 7-13, 2004
June 21, 2004 - For Daily Winners of June 14-20, 2004
June 30, 2004 - For Daily Winners of June 21-29, 2004

15.2 For Monthly Draws of Minor and Major Prizes:

May 03, 2004 - For Monthly Draw of Minor and Major Prize of April
May 31, 2004 - For Monthly Draw of Minor and Major Prize of May
June 30, 2004 - For Monthly Draw of Minor and Major Prize of June

16. Promo period of the raffle promotion is March 29 - June 29, 2004.

17. Employees of Mercury Group of Companies, Inc. (MGCI) and its subsidiaries, Globe Telecommunications, Innove Communications, Harrison Communications, Smart Telecommunications, PLDT, PILTEL, ICON, BBDO, Ace Saatchi, FCB, DDB, Beyond, Inc., New Thinkers, Meta Media, other advertising agencies concerned and service providers including their relatives up to the 2nd degree of consanguinity or affinity are disqualified from joining the promo

Per DOH-BFAD No. 0185 s. 2004

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NAKASISIGURO GAMOT AY LAGING BAGO

Get gutted ferry out of bay, Aboitiz told

By Tarra Quismundo

THE PHILIPPINE Coast Guard has asked Aboitiz Transport System Corp. to remove as soon as possible the charred hull of SuperFerry 14 from Sisiman Bay in Mariveles, Bataan.

PCG Commandant Vice Admiral Arthur Gosingan said yesterday the ship, lying on its starboard side near the shore, posed a risk to marine life and bayside residents.

"It has an effect on the marine environment and is a hazard to navigation," Gosingan said in an interview, referring to the bunker oil still in the 10,000-ton ship's hold and its steel frame that obstructs local fishermen at night.

An oil spill boom was placed around the ship after it was towed to Mariveles, after fire gutted the inter-island ferry at dawn on Feb. 27.

Of 899 passengers and crew, more than 700 survived while the PCG information office's last tally showed that 111 were missing. Of these, 28 bodies, 49 skeletal remains and 37 body parts had been retrieved.

The PCG and volunteer teams recently ended retrieval operations on the ship, after no more human remains were found.

Gosingan said the salvage operation must be started as soon as possible, since this would take two to three months.

The PCG would only monitor the operations since it has no capacity to remove the ship from the bay.

Aboitiz, which had hired a private firm to remove debris from the A-deck to help search and retrieval operations, is responsible for the removal of ferry from the bay, Gosingan said. He added that the bunker oil is in the process of being removed from the ship.

The ship's cargo, including container vans and vehicles, would first have to be removed before it could be pulled upright and refloated, Gosingan said.

"But it is not an easy task. It takes a lot of effort to even just remove the cargo left inside the ship," he said.

Gosingan again assured relatives of the missing the PCG would resume the search for remains once the ship was upright.

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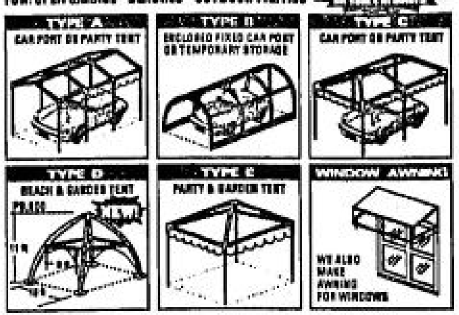
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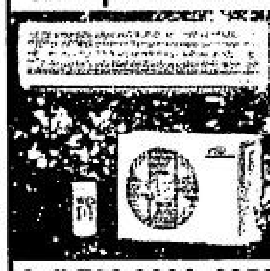

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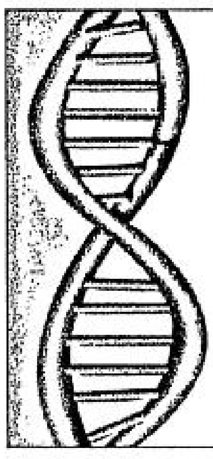

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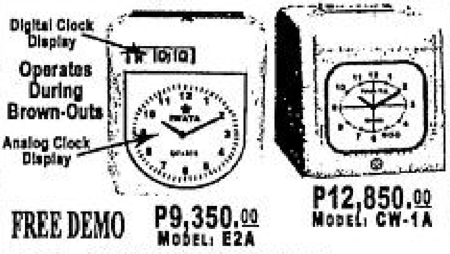

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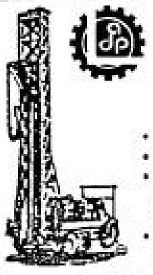

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‘Muslims not our target’

By Christian V. Esguerra

MUSLIMS are not being singled out in the government's effort to smoke out terrorists, the Philippine National Police said yesterday.

"No, they're not," said Director Avelino Razon Jr., PNP director for operations, when asked if the authorities were picking on Muslims.

The joint police and military raid on an Islamic Center in Cubao, Quezon City, last Friday was a legitimate operation against suspected terrorists believed to be hiding there, he said.

Arrested was Fatima Santos after the raiders reportedly found firearms, grenades and ammunition in the four-story building located at the corner of Ermin Garcia and Purdue streets in Cubao. The building's occupants charged the guns and ammo were planted.

A raid at another Islamic Center in Novaliches, also in Quezon City, later that day reportedly yielded bomb-making equipment.

Razon dismissed speculations the raids were connected to the proposal to require residents of Muslim communities in Metro Manila to have IDs.

"It's not true," Razon said. "In fact, the idea (of IDs) came from the Muslims themselves. They believe it would help them maintain peace and order and keep terrorists from infiltrating their areas."

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ELECTION DISPUTE

Opposition agrees to Chen's offer to talk

TAIPEI, Taiwan—Taiwan's opposition leader on Sunday agreed to meet President Chen Shui-bian to discuss a recount of last weekend's disputed election, bringing the island's political crisis a step closer toward a resolution.

A spokesperson for the opposition Nationalist Party also welcomed Sunday an independent investigation of a puzzling shooting on the eve of the March 20 vote that slightly wounded Chen and might have helped him win his narrow reelection.

Lien Chan of the Nationalist Party and his running mate, James Soong, have alleged that the election was marred by irregularities and claimed the shooting gave Chen an unfair boost by winning him sympathy votes. However, they have provided little evidence.

Thousands of opposition supporters have been protesting all week, and nearly half a million of them turned out on Saturday for a rally in front of the Presidential Office, demanding an immediate recount or a new election.

After Saturday's huge demonstration, Chen offered to meet Lien on Monday to discuss a recount, which he has previously supported. He also endorsed an investigation into the shooting.

"The invitation has come late," Alex Tsai, an opposition spokesperson, told reporters. But he added Lien had agreed to the meeting.

Tsai said both sides would discuss issues related to the recount, including where it will be conducted, whether judges will be involved and how to decide ballots are valid or invalid.

Tsai said Lien would soon file a petition to nullify the results of the vote. If the petition is filed on Monday, the recount could begin Wednesday.

Taiwan's High Court has been examining the opposition's request for a recount. But Chen has said he's willing to ask the court to skip a hearing and order an immediate recount. The move would significantly speed up the recount process as it could take up to six months if judges hold hearings to evaluate evidence.

Tsai also backed Chen's proposal to open an independent probe of the shooting in the southern city of Tainan that slightly injured the President and Vice President Annette Lu. But he said investigators must also examine the shooting's impact on the election, the assailant's motivation and possible conspirators in the attack.

No arrests have been made in the shooting, and police have not identified any suspects.

The president also agreed that an independent investigation team be led by renowned forensic expert Henry Lee, who worked on the O.J. Simpson case in America.

Saturday's rally in Taipei was relatively peaceful, but police had to drag away and disperse the last 200 protesters remaining outside the Presidential Office early Sunday, hours after the rally ended.

More than 1,000 riot police rounded up the protesters, many waving flags and refusing to leave. Some were carried away and confined in police buses, while others were driven to side streets where they later left.

In the United States, a series of protests have echoed the outrage in Taiwan. About 1,800 people gathered in Los Angeles on Saturday, waving red and blue Taiwanese flags and chanting "shame" in a parking lot in the city's bustling Chinatown neighborhood. *AP*

China press plays up protests

BEIJING—China's state newspapers splashed Taiwanese election protests across their front pages on Sunday, highlighting the Communist mainland's hopes to cast doubt on the legitimacy of Taiwan's president and its democratic system.

Newspapers also announced to China's public their government's protest to Washington over its message of congratulations to Taiwanese President Chen Shui-bian on his reelection victory.

"Taiwanese masses protest 'unfair, unjust' election," blared a headline in the Beijing Youth Daily, one of China's biggest mass-market newspapers. The tabloid Beijing News ran a photo of a Taiwanese demonstrator holding a sign saying, "I don't want another four years of confusion and unfairness."

Chinese newspapers and state media have lavished coverage on the growing protests in Taiwan, in contrast to their silence about the March 20 election before it took place. The reports on Sunday came from the official Xinhua News Agency, which is allowed by Taiwan to station a reporter in Taipei, the island's capital.

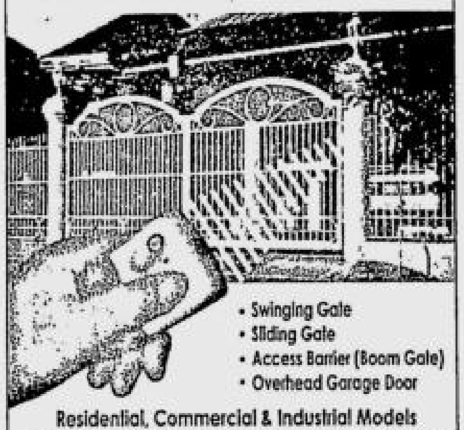
The abrupt shift reflects Chinese eagerness to cast doubt on Chen's legitimacy and Taiwanese politics, which the communist government sees as a dangerous example to its own people of a successful ethnic Chinese democracy.

China and Taiwan separated in 1949, but Beijing claims the island as its own territory and rejects the notion of Taiwan's leader as a national president. The two sides have no official ties.

The mainland has accused Chen of plotting to make its de facto independence permanent, abandoning the goal they once shared of one day uniting. Beijing says that would lead to war.

The Xinhua dispatch printed in most Chinese newspapers on Sunday was factual, reporting that 500,000 Taiwanese gathered in the rain to protest unspecified election irregularities.

It noted Taiwanese opposition demands for an investigation into the puzzling shooting that wounded Chen a day before the voting. Some analysts suggest voter sympathy might have been decisive in his razor-thin victory over challenger Lien Chan. *AP*



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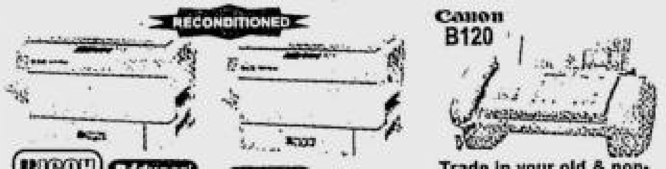

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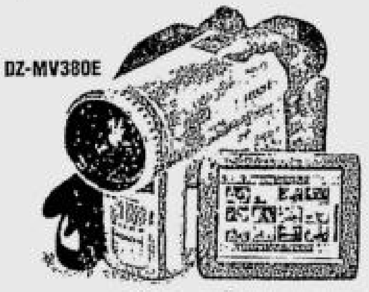

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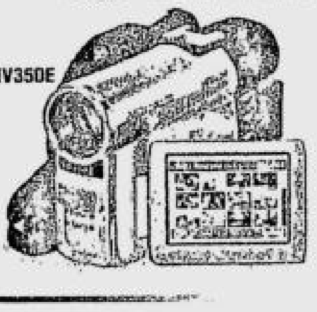

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HK solons hit China interference

HONG KONG—Opposition lawmakers marched to Hong Kong's government headquarters on Sunday to protest Beijing's decision to dictate political reform policy in this former British colony—a move seen as suppressing the territory's democratic aspirations.

Protesters from the Democratic Party chanted "the move restricts Hong Kong people from ruling Hong Kong."

One demonstrator dressed in a black cape stepped on printed Chinese characters saying "direct elections" in footage broadcast on Hong Kong's Cable TV, which said about 30 people participated in the peaceful march from a downtown park to the main government complex.

Police spokesperson T.K. Ng estimated the number at about 20.

China announced Friday that its top legislative panel would interpret provisions in Hong Kong's mini-constitution that detail how the territory's leader and lawmakers are chosen.

Pro-democracy figures, who want an elected Hong Kong leader and legislature by 2007 and 2008, believe this is Beijing's method of rejecting their demands. Chinese officials have indicated they want to go slow on reforms.

China's decision has also stirred outrage because Hong Kong was guaranteed significant autonomy when it returned to Chinese rule in 1997. Hong Kong has a separate legal and political system from the mainland.

Calls for democracy have gained momentum with the birth of a "people power" movement after a 500,000-strong protest on July 1 forced Hong Kong leader Tung Chee-hwa to back down on an anti-subversion bill that Beijing wanted passed.

Many feared the measure would clamp down on Western-style civil liberties left over from British rule.

Hong Kong is only partially democratic. Tung was chosen by a 800-person elite committee loyal to Beijing. Only 24 of 60 sitting lawmakers were directly elected, with the rest picked by special interest groups and the committee which picked Tung. *AP*

Thaksin, aides hold emergency meeting

BANGKOK—Thailand held an emergency security meeting on Sunday as a wave of violence in the Muslim south escalated with a bomb blast that injured 28 people in a tourist district in the first attack on a civilian target.

The government condemned the perpetrators of Saturday night's attack and said it would retaliate with stiffened measures to curb the unrest that has left 55 people dead since the start of the year.

"Those who carried out the blast last night aimed to cause casualties among innocent people," said government spokesperson Jakrapob Penkair. "The incident shows they have ... changed their strategies."

Until now the violence has targeted government officials, police and military officers, and even Buddhist monks in brutal hit-and-run strikes aimed at challenging the rule of the central government in Bangkok.

But the blast in Sungai Kolok, a town on the Malaysian border that is packed with nightspots, karaoke bars and brothels, is the first time the attacks have targeted civilians or tourist districts.

Police said security had been stepped up around Sungai Kolok, with extra road blocks and patrols across the ramshackle town in Narathiwat province, while a team of investigators began probing the attack.

Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra called Deputy Prime Minister Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, Defense Minister Chetta Tanajaro and Army commander Chaisit Shinawatra to attend crisis talks to discuss the developments.

Jakrapob said the leaders had resolved to analyze separatist and terrorist networks operating in Thailand and determine their links with other illicit activities like the narcotics trade which flourishes on the Thai-Burma border.

"This is still an internal problem, even though the people who are responsible want everyone to think it has become an international issue," he said.

Police said the bomb was placed on a motorcycle near a strip of bars, and that most of those injured were women working in the nightspots and their customers. *AFP*

Megawati rallies supporters

JAKARTA—Indonesia's President Megawati Sukarnoputri urged some 100,000 supporters to unite on Sunday in a colorful show of strength ahead of upcoming parliamentary elections.

Beginning soon after dawn, supporters dressed in red and black—Megawati's party colors—paraded through the streets of Jakarta on overcrowded buses and trucks or on motorbikes.

"Mega, Mega, Mega," the crowd shouted as the president entered Jakarta's largest stadium. Some carried huge papier-mache bulls—the symbol of her Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle.

The rally was Megawati's last major campaign event in the capital before the polls on April 5, in which she is predicted to lose votes amid disappointment at the pace of reform since she took office in 2002.

Her speech was characteristically short on campaign pledges or policy initiatives, but that did not seem to concern her supporters, who were happy to sing and dance along with her.

Earlier, two of Indonesia's top rock bands entertained the crowds.

"If we are united, we are strong, if we are strong, we can progress," she said. *AP*

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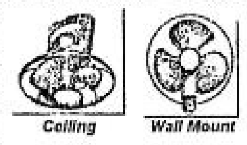

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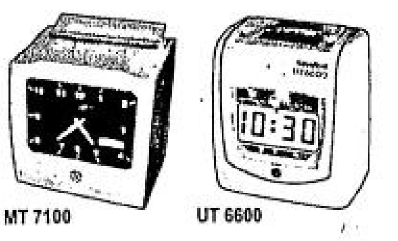

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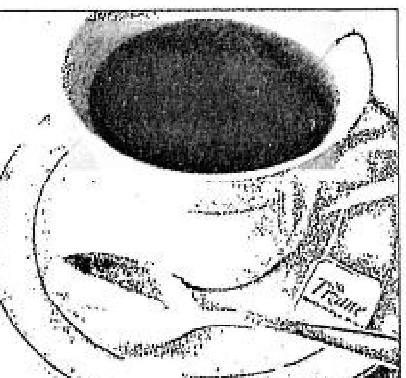

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Foes urge Israel PM to step down

JERUSALEM—Israeli opposition leaders demanded Sunday that Ariel Sharon step down, following media reports that the state attorney is recommending the prime minister be indicted for bribe-taking.

However, the final decision on whether to indict is up to the attorney general, not the state attorney.

Sharon's aides and the state attorney's office had no comment.

Legal analysts said State Attorney Edna Arbel's reported recommendation carries great weight, but that there is no legal reason for Sharon to step down before an indictment is handed down.

Some analysts said that while under a cloud of indictment, Sharon could try to speed up his plan to withdraw from parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The proposed pullback is widely supported by the Israeli public.

Israeli media reported Saturday that Arbel has written a draft of her opinion regarding an indictment and was planning to hand it to Attorney General Meni Mazuz in a day or two. Mazuz, the reports said, will make his decision in the coming month. *AP*

Afghanistan elections moved to September

KABUL—Afghanistan's landmark national elections will be delayed until September to give the United Nations more time to organize the violence-threatened vote, President Hamid Karzai said Sunday.

"We are ready to manage both elections—for the parliament and presidency—in September," Karzai told reporters at his palace in the Afghan capital.

Officials had warned repeatedly that the country's first post-Taliban elections, originally slated for June, would be delayed because of logistical problems and security fears.

So far, only 1.5 million of an estimated 10.5 million eligible voters have been registered for the elections, and it remains unclear how the United Nations intends to carry out a plan to register most of the others in May.

The Afghan government said on Saturday it would disarm 40,000 irregular Afghan militia soldiers and round up heavy weapons around the country in time for the vote to reduce the risk of voter intimidation.

But the world body, the US-led military coalition and the Afghan government are still working on plans to protect election workers from Taliban-led militants plaguing the south and east.

The top UN special representative in Afghanistan, Jean Arnault, welcomed the delay, saying it would allow time also for NATO to expand its peacekeeping operations beyond Kabul before the vote.

He also called on the Afghan government to guarantee a level playing field for challengers to Karzai and a rash of new political parties.

"Free and fair is not a given," Arnault said. "Many things that haven't happened in the past few years have to happen."

A Taliban spokesperson said the delay until September was "a humiliation and defeat" for Karzai and his American backers and claimed the elections would be fixed.

"They want to divert the attention of Afghans from the importance of jihad," or holy war, Hamid Agha told The Associated Press in a telephone call from an undisclosed location.

More than 200 people have died this year in violence around the country, including aid workers and government employees, as well as militants and foreign and Afghan soldiers.

Five foreign UN staffers helping prepare for the elections were attacked March 14 with rocket-propelled grenades and gunfire as they slept in a government compound in eastern Paktia province.

Security for the elections is also complicated by violence between rival factions, such as March 21 clashes in the western city of Herat that killed about 16 people, including a minister in Karzai's Cabinet.

Karzai said the United Nations and Afghan electoral officials had told him that the presidential election could have been held in June or July, but that parliamentary elections could only be held in September.

A handful of candidates including a disgruntled former Cabinet minister have said they will run in the presidential election. But none is viewed as a serious challenger to Karzai, who has said he too will seek a new five-year term. *AP*

Arab leaders divided; summit postponed indefinitely

TUNIS, Tunisia—A planned two-day Arab League summit has been postponed indefinitely owing to disputes among the leaders over how to tackle a US reform plan and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Arab leaders had hoped to use the conference, which was to begin Monday, to re-launch a Saudi-crafted peace initiative to Israel and to submit their own proposals for political reforms.

However, last week's assassination of Hamas founder Sheik Ahmed Yassin provoked widespread outrage in the Arab world, making it politically risky for some states to pursue a peace initiative.

Late Saturday night, a Tunisian foreign ministry spokesperson, Hatem bin Salem, told reporters "there are disagreements" and announced the postponement of the summit.

The foreign ministry cited the "existence of difference of views" regarding issues "of great importance to the process of development, modernization and reform in our Arab countries."

"Tunisia strongly regrets the postponement of this summit on which Arab and international opinion has pinned great hopes considering the delicate situation through which the Arab nation is going and the deadlock of the Palestinian issue after the recent tragic events," a ministry statement said.

Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa brushed past reporters as he left, saying "No comment" three times.

But later Egypt's semiofficial Middle East News Agency (Mena) quoted him as saying: "The postponement will have grave and major repercussions on collective Arab action. We should not blame Tunisia alone. It is shared by all the Arabs."

Mena reported that when Moussa was asked if he would reconvene Arab foreign ministers, he replied: "This is premature and it is in the hands of the rulers."

US officials had hoped the summit would breathe new life into a two-year-old Arab peace initiative toward Israel and address the challenge of political reform as the United States attempts to establish democracy in Iraq. *AP*

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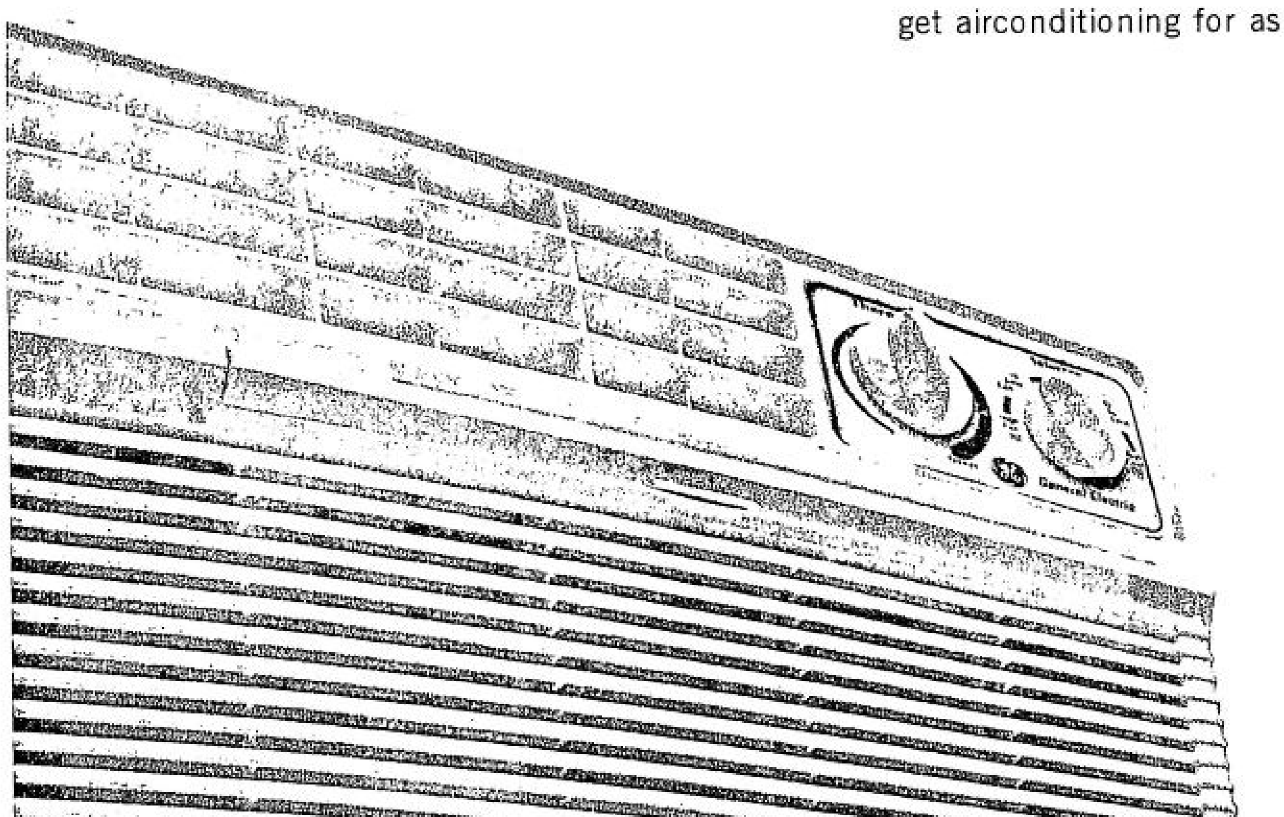

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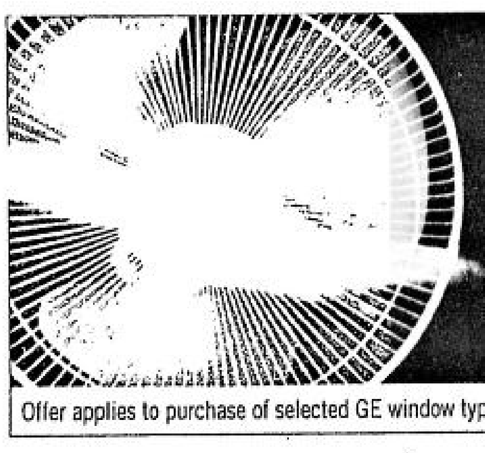

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Israel intelligence made faulty Iraq assessments

JERUSALEM—Israeli intelligence inflated Iraq's chemical and biological weapons capabilities ahead of last year's US-led invasion, while failing to verify whether Saddam Hussein had missiles that could hit Israel, participants in a parliamentary inquiry of the intelligence services said Sunday.

A report on the investigation is to be released later Sunday.

The report does not suggest Israel deliberately misled US intelligence, but says Israel's coordination with foreign intelligence agencies was faulty, said members of the panel of inquiry, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The investigators are expected to deliver a sharp rebuke to the country's vaunted intelligence services and offer recommendations for avoiding similar mistakes in the future, the legislators said.

A member of the parliamentary subcommittee that prepared the report said Sunday that Israeli intelligence ahead of the March 2003 invasion of Iraq was based on "assessments rather than hard information." He spoke on condition of anonymity.

The report said that such hearsay, sent to the United States for verification, was leaked to the Israeli media in the guise of fact. Apparently, the information was recycled and accepted as fact by the Israeli government, it said.

Since ousting Saddam Hussein, the US-led coalition's technical experts have failed to find any weapons of mass destruction.

The report recommends the appointment of a special intelligence adviser to the Israeli prime minister and legislation to clearly define the roles of the various Israeli civil and military intelligence services. The recommendations are non-binding.

Committee chair Yuval Steinitz told the Jerusalem Post daily that he considered the report a case study aimed at refining Israel's methods for handling intelligence about hostile states not bordering Israel.

The Israeli subcommittee spent eight months considering the intelligence agencies' performance on Iraq. The 80-page report to be released on Sunday is the unclassified portion of its study. A secret section is still in preparation.

Last year, the Israeli military ordered citizens to unseal the gas masks they keep with them on a permanent basis. The step cost the country millions of dollars, although no missiles were fired on Israel during the war.

In the 1991 Gulf War, Saddam's forces fired 39 Scud missiles at Israel. All had conventional warheads, causing considerable damage but few casualties.

The parliamentary report was based on the closed-door testimony of some 70 witnesses, including the prime minister, defense minister, military chief, and the heads of the Mossad foreign intelligence service, the Shin Bet domestic intelligence service, and the military intelligence service. *AP*

Nasa jet reaches speed of 8,000 kph

LOS ANGELES—Three years after its first test flight ended in an explosion, Nasa on Saturday successfully launched an experimental jet that the agency believes reached a record-setting speed of about 8,000 kph.

The unpiloted X-43A made an 11-second powered flight, then went through some twists and turns during a six-minute glide before plunging into the Pacific Ocean about 640 kph off the California coast.

"It was fun all the way to Mach 7," said Joel Sitz, project manager at Nasa's Dryden Flight Research Center.

Flight engineer Lawrence Huebner said preliminary data indicated the needle-nosed jet reached a maximum speed of slightly over seven times the speed of sound, or about 8,000 kph, after a rocket boosted it to about 5,630 kph.

Huebner said it was the first time an "air-breathing" jet had ever traveled so fast. The rocket-powered X-15 reached Mach 6.7 in 1967.

"It's a great way to end, certainly all the sweeter because of the challenges we've had to step up to and overcome through the life of this project," said Griffin Corpening, Dreyden's chief engineer on the project.

The first X-43A flight ended in failure June 2, 2001, after the modified Pegasus rocket used to accelerate the plane veered off course and was detonated. An investigation board found preflight analyses failed to predict how the rocket would perform, leaving its control system unable to maintain stable flight.

Nasa built the X-43A under a $250-million program to develop and test an exotic type of engine called a supersonic-combustion ramjet, or scramjet.

In theory, the air-breathing engine could propel an airplane-to speeds of Mach 7 or faster, enabling around-the-world flights that would take several hours. The Department of Defense also is working on the technology, which it's eyeing for use in bombers that quickly could reach targets anywhere on the globe.

The 3.6-meter-long, 1,260-kilogram X-43A was mounted on a Pegasus rocket booster and carried to an altitude of 12,000 meters by a modified B-52 bomber, which took off from Edwards Air Force Base in the high desert.

A few seconds after the craft was dropped, the rocket flared, sending the jet skyward on a streak of flame and light. At about 30,000 meters, the rocket dropped away.

The scramjet took over, using up about a kilogram of gaseous hydrogen fuel before gliding. Applause rang out in the control center at Dryden Flight Research Center at Edwards. *AP*

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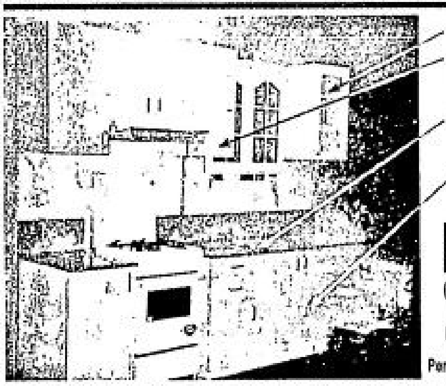
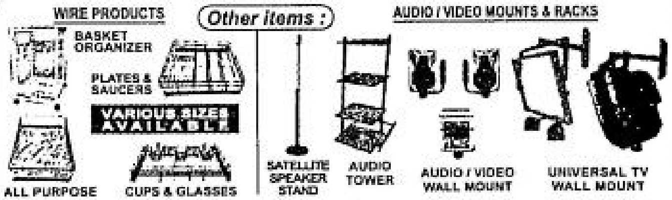
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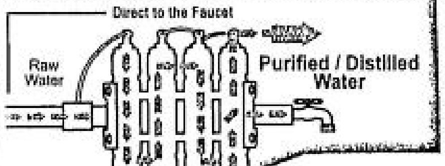

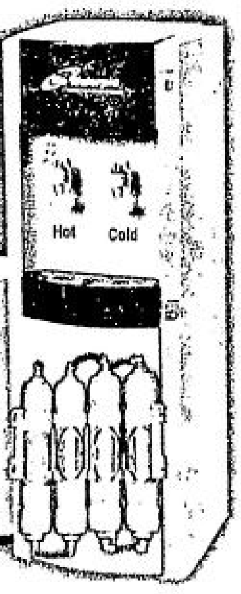

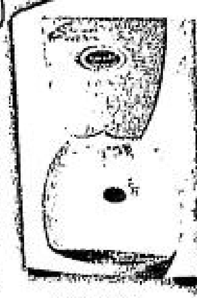

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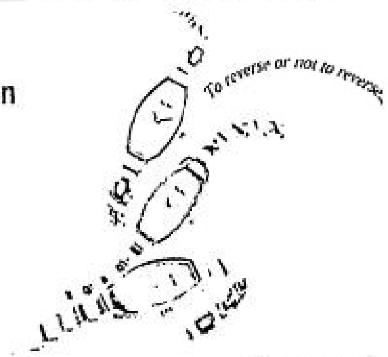
To reverse or not to reverse

From SEIKO WATCH CORPORATION

Bank on the spot. A

Intro

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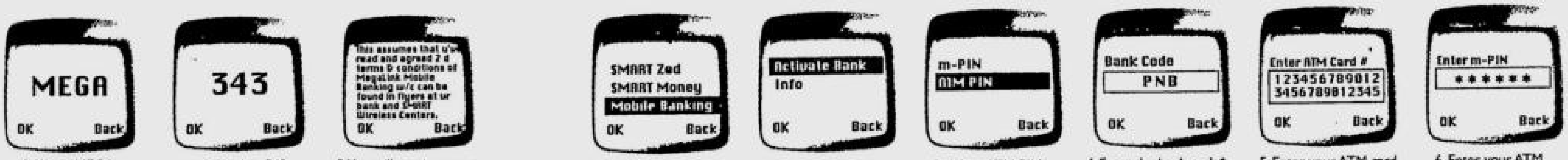
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OPINION

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Editor in Chief **Letty Jimenez-Magsanoc**
Managing Editor **Jose Ma. D. Nolasco**
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Australian shocker

EDITORIAL

THE NEWS from Sydney over the weekend deserves prominent play not only in the sports section, but on the political pages as well. World record-holder Ian Thorpe—the 21-year-old swimming phenomenon Australians fondly call the Thorpedo—was disqualified from competing in the Olympics in his best event for failing the one-start rule.

Thorpe fell into the water moments before the start of his 400-meter freestyle heat. He went back to his starting block, but referee John Keppie pulled him out of the race, ruling that Thorpe had made a false start.

Now let's put this in perspective. Thorpe is one of the world's most outstanding athletes. He has been undefeated in the 400-meter freestyle since 1998, when he was 15. He has broken the world record in this event five times in five years. At the moment, his record stands at 3 minutes and 40.08 seconds.

He won three gold medals in the 2000 Sydney Olympics, one of them for the 400-meter freestyle. The decision to exclude him from his qualifying heat means he won't be around to defend his crown in the Athens Olympics, later this August.

His swimming club naturally appealed the disqualification; the one-start rule, which came into force the same year Thorpe emerged as world champion, is considered by many as overly strict. But Keppie remained firm, and a three-person jury of Australian swimming officials backed him up.

An emotional David Flaskas, Thorpe's manager, said the champion and his team had accepted the final decision, which was issued mere hours after the incident. "The rules are the rules," he said.

The rules are the rules. If we needed one more example of what it means to live in a society of laws, we could do worse than consider the sinking of the Thorpedo. "The rules are the rules" means they apply to everyone within their jurisdiction, whether beginner or defending world champion. "The rules are the rules" means that justice, truly, is no respecter of persons. The lady with the blindfold does not see color or race, educational qualification or professional attainment, wealth or poverty, none of the personal attributes which all too often define our place in society.

If something similar to the Sydney false start had happened here, we can be sure of any or all of the following: the rules would be bent to accommodate sure gold medalists (say in the Southeast Asian or Asian Games); politicians and sports officials would demand that the rules be changed, because national interest and pride is at stake; the appeals process would last interminably; and so on.

To be sure, politicians in Australia waded right into the water. Opposition leader Mark Latham managed a slight dig at the administration: "Surely Australia has got to put its best team forward." And Australian Sports Minister Rod Kemp said he hoped swimming officials would find a way to "resolve this matter so the world would get to see the greatest 400-meter freestyle swimmer in action."

But Kemp was also quick to say he would not move to change the rule. A former Olympic champion, Kieren Perkins, joined other Australian Olympians and sports officials in dismissing calls for the one-start rule to be revamped.

"It must be gut-wrenching for him [Thorpe] but the Oympics is bigger than one person," Perkins said.

In an environment poisoned by 45 days of empty celebrity campaigning and negative politics, the report of Thorpe's strictly-by-the-rulebook disqualification seemed like, well, a splash in clean, pure waters.

Threats to the Amazon

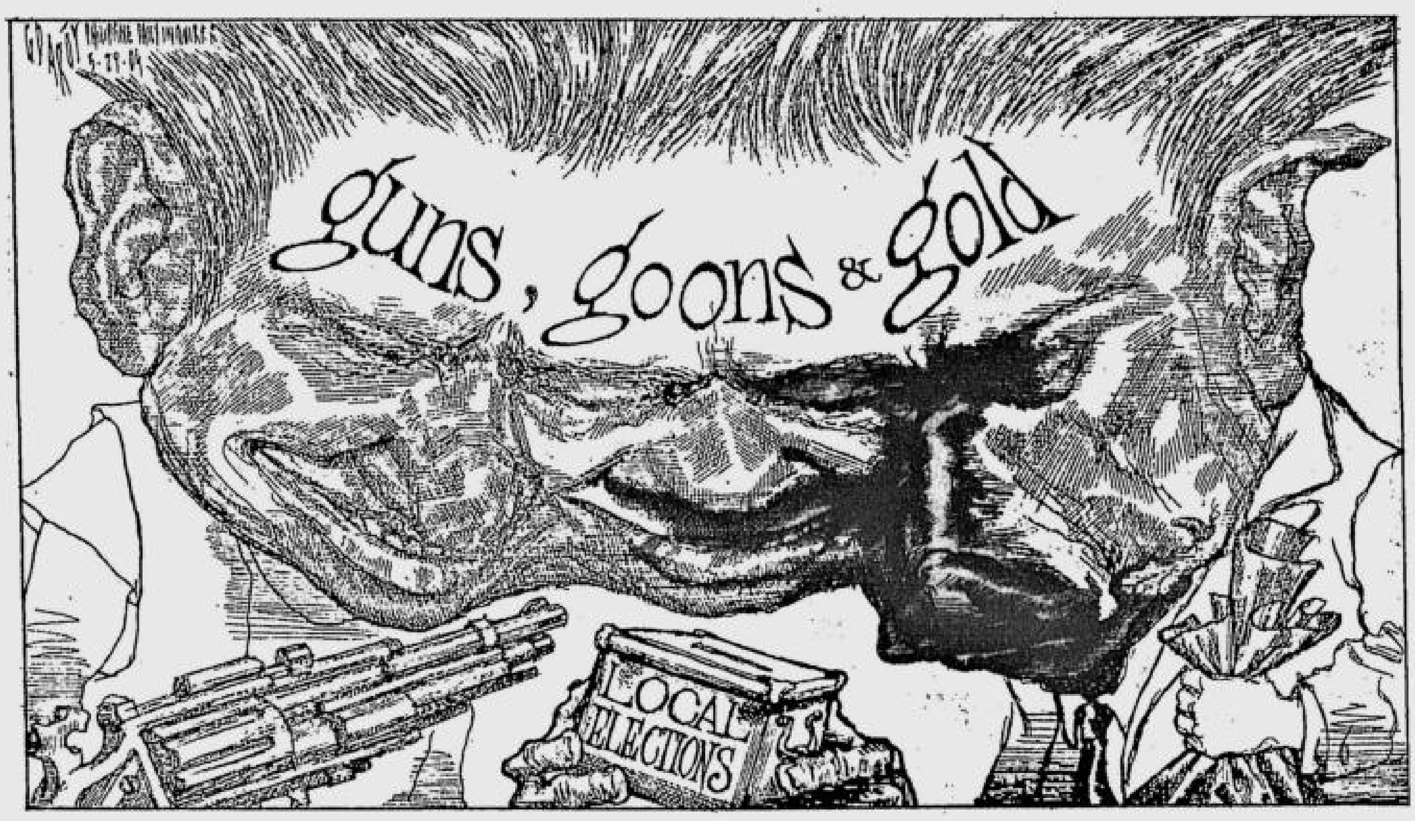
FOREIGN COMMENT

ENVIRONMENTAL degradation is one of the consequences of a lack of planned economic development. Emissions of greenhouse gases, coupled with deforestation, have triggered a growing global warming trend. Yet most industrialized nations still show no signs of seriously limiting their gas emissions despite the emergence of growing environmental concerns.

The main air purifier for earth's atmosphere is the Amazon, but this lung is now severely threatened. Scientists estimate that the Amazon will lose 15 percent of its territory by 2020, owing to logging and increased agriculture. Rational methods of exploiting these natural resources must be put in place, along with international accords to safeguard the environment.

Until then, these trends will continue unchecked, imperiling many life forms until human beings are increasingly affected.

Clarin (Buenos Aires, Argentina)



Cancel franchises of striking buses and jeepneys

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

JEEPNEY and bus drivers are again threatening to paralyze transportation today if the government doesn't give them their double-barrelled demands: a P1.50 fare increase and a P1 rollback in fuel prices for them. Government reaction is the usual: it calls the drivers to a conference where it holds their hand and makes promises like an indulgent parent soothing a spoiled child. And like a spoiled child, the drivers repeatedly go into tantrums, threatening and shouting if they don't get what they want. It's a never-ending cycle and the drivers get bolder each time the government knuckles under.

But any sensible person will tell you that the way to handle a spoiled child is not to spoil him or her further but to impose discipline. And that's what our drivers lack, whether they're driving or asking for fare increases: discipline. That is why drivers violate traffic rules with impunity, creating anarchy in the streets and chaos in the traffic.

Because the government does not impose discipline. Instead, it fields "*kotong*" and lazy cops.

This is surprising because the chief of the Department of Transportation and Communication (DOTC) is the former chief of the Philippine National Police (PNP): Leandro Mendoza. On second thought, this is not surprising because Mendoza also was not able to impose discipline in the PNP when he was its chief. His predecessor, Panfilo Lacson, was able to do that. He was able to get rid of the *kotong* cops, reduce their protruding bellies (from too much free food and no exercise), make them return stolen vehicles recovered but which the cops had been using as their own for years, and put fear in the hearts of kidnappers and bank robbers. When Mendoza took over the PNP, the cops went back to their old ways.

Which brings us back to the scheduled transport strike today. The jeepneys and buses won't ply their routes today which is supposed to scare the government enough as to approve an increase in fares and a reduction of fuel prices. But wouldn't it be wonderful to have no unruly jeepneys and buses in the streets? Permanently? After all, there are the LRT and Metrorail lines (LRTA, hurry up with the other rail lines!) and the government has promised to field buses from out of town and military trucks to ferry stranded passengers.

The problem in Metro Manila and other urban areas is that there are too many vehicles and too few streets. We already have an oversupply of buses, jeepneys and tricycles. Just look at the buses, jeepneys and tricycles lined up bumper-to-bumper waiting for passengers and filling up the streets. Plus, the car manufacturers keep churning out hundreds of new cars every day when there are no more new streets to put them in nor garages for parking.

The solution to the traffic congestion is not barricaded intersections or U-turn slots but less vehicles, more parking buildings and stricter enforcement of traffic rules.

Reduce the number of buses, jeepneys and tricycles because there are just too many of them already. Prohibit selling of vehicles to individuals unless they can show a genuine title to a garage or a parking slot, as is now being done in Tokyo.

And in case of a transport strike, isn't that a good justification to cancel the franchises of the strikers? After all, that is a violation of their franchises. Besides reducing the number of vehicles in the streets, that would instill discipline among drivers.

The Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Office (LTFRB) has issued a surfeit of franchises because it never kept track of the numbers and because fixers were (and are still) busy in that agency. And because previous LTFRB officials were wimps (I won't say corrupt). The new LTFRB chief is a lady but she's supposed to have balls and so she should be able to put order in the agency and, by extension, in the streets.

As for Mendoza, the DOTC chief, don't be afraid of the drivers. You're supposed to be a macho man, show them who's boss.

Besides, transportation policies need to be adjusted. The biggest mistake of the government was to hand over the bus and jeepney operations in Metro Manila completely to private enterprise. Anybody with enough money for a jeepney, bus, tricycle and for bribing government employees can operate one. Result: traffic congestion and anarchy. Cities with the best transport systems are those where the government operates it. So there is a coordinated schedule of trips. Free enterprise may be good for business but city transportation is not for free enterprise. It needs firm control. But the government abdicated that in Metro Manila. It took the easy way out and left transport operations to private operators. And so we are reaping the whirlwind for it.

* * *

TODAY'S JOKE: The disqualification case against FPJ because of his being an illegitimate child has spawned jokes on illegitimacy. This is one of them.

A young man fell in love with the daughter of a family friend and told his father he wants to marry her. "You can't marry her," said the father.

"Why?" he asked.

"Your mother doesn't know it but that girl is your sister," the father replied. The young man went to his mother and reported what his father told him.

"Do you really love her?" the mother asked.

"Yes, very much."

"Then go ahead and marry her."

"But father said she is my sister."

"She's not," said the mother. "Your father doesn't know it, but you are not his son."

Serve the people

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

GLORIA Macapagal-Arroyo says the cases of misuse of taxpayers' money filed against her are meant to prevent her from serving the people. "Every case filed against me is an opportunity for my detractors and the opposition to grandstand in the media."

GMA specifically said this last week in reference to another anti-corruption suit filed against her, this time by former LTO head Mariano Santiago. In his trips to Baguio, Cebu, Nueva Ecija, Bulacan and Metro Manila, Santiago said, he saw the proliferation of huge billboards, from 2 feet by 8 feet to 4 feet by 8 feet, lining the highways. The billboards carried the words, "Programang Pangtrabaho ni Pangulong GMA," and of course an outsized picture of GMA.

These billboards are paid for by the taxpayers. The picture they carry is the same picture GMA is using in her own campaign ads—though that presumes there is a distinction between her government ads and her campaign ads.

As the former activists who are now with GMA know, the phrase, "Serve the people" comes from progressive tradition, and was (and is being) used by the activists and revolutionaries as their guiding principle. The two things I expressly remember about it are that, one, you should not take a single piece of needle or thread from the masses without their permission and without compensation, and, two, that you should never draw attention to yourself or to your service. Serving the people went with another motto, which was, "It is a privilege to serve the people." Serving the people is its own reward. One who has served the people is rewarded by the thought he has done so, not by his name being advertised from village to village as source of beneficence or worse, as messiah.

As I keep saying, there are no limits to the things GMA will misappropriate or pilfer. And I cannot understand why neither the activists nor the NGOs want to protest this particular one. "Serve the people" lies at the very core of their beliefs. Well, they never protested GMA's "war against terror," notwithstanding that it waged war on every fundamental belief activism and civil society stood for, from peace to human rights.

I have read and heard GMA supporters in newspapers and TV say the plenitude of suits being raised against her for corruption shows only that she is getting stronger, which is why everyone is at pains to stop her. The only comparable fatuity I've heard is the one said by an Erap supporter in the past that the reported surge in crime during his administration shows only that Erap is a stickler for free press—otherwise it would not have been reported. It's a classic exercise in missing the point. The rise in crime during Erap's time in fact showed only that he was leading by example. And the recent rise in cases of corruption against GMA in fact shows only that she is corrupt. Unless she is stopped, we are looking at the peso becoming wartime "Japanese money" after the elections, the kind where you have to carry a *bayong* to buy a can of sardines.

Pray, how do those billboards—and ads and posters and T-shirts for street sweeps—serve the people?

At the very least, even if they did represent a real service, they call attention to the provider of the service. And that is a monumental understatement. The billboards are an ego-trip beyond belief. It may be true that her detractors are using every case against her to grandstand, but it is infinitely truer that she is using every spot of earth along highways to preen. The first is free, the second costs. Personally, I cannot imagine anyone more self-absorbed she can endure the sight of herself everywhere she goes and is determined to make the world endure it too. It's a worse case of self-absorption than Miriam Santiago's and a worse case of narcissism than Loren Legarda's.

Quite apart than that, there is one fundamental difference between the service the activists provide and the one this presumes to give. The service the activists give is truly given out of the goodness of the heart. They do not have to give it. They do not have to scorn a career and endure the bitter cold and oppressive heat of the forest fastnesses to help the people fight tyranny. On the other hand, whatever service GMA gives is not gratuity, it is demanded of her. It is her duty and obligation. She was put in power by the people, and whatever roads and bridges she builds, if any, comes from the people. It is money worked off their backs. Government service is not a boon to them, it is their right.

The only thing that serves the people is a sign on a road and bridge that says, "This is where your taxes go." That sign asserts that public funds belong to the people and should go back to the people. That is all. Any other decoration there, most of all the picture of someone they shoved to power telling them she is doing them a favor by raising a half-built road and bridge—and regaling them with her visage—slaps them in the face. It adds insult to injury. It fries the taxpayer in his own fat and demands that he says, "Thank you."

But more than that, it violates the most basic principle of serving the people, which is never to take a single needle or thread from the masses without their permission. That is theft, of unpardonable proportions. If that is so, how call taking from the people hundreds of roads and bridges, thousands of classrooms and millions of textbooks to make billboards so that they may gaze upon the face of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo wherever they look? How call taking from the hungry, the sick and the dying, without their permission, without compensation and without compunction, money that could have gone to their food, their medicine and their ministration?

Serve the people?

No, screw the people.

Susan solicits from Chinese—in fluent Fukienese

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

AS the President admitted in a recent TV interview, the election has narrowed down to between her and FPJ. The other candidates are fast becoming marginalized. The fight, in fact, has become so tight so that each camp is trying to maximize all its strengths and resources, as evidenced by all the lawsuits the opposition is hurling toward GMA. In an effort to blunt GMA's blitzkrieg in Cebu, where all the big political leaders went solid for her, FPJ summoned his wife, actress Susan Roces, to campaign on stage with him, the first time he had done so. Actually, Roces is a more formidable campaigner than FPJ, who can only mumble one-liners mostly drawn from his old scripts. For instance, as Star columnist Chit Pedrosa cited in a recent column, FPJ was asked how he proposed to stabilize the peso, and his response was "*Magtrabaho lang nang magtrabaho*"; pressed on how he proposed to handle the growth rate of the country, he said: "Well, *ano kasi 'yan, eh, ang* growth rate *na 'yan tataas din 'yan kapag tumaas na ang* funding."

By contrast, Roces is articulate in English, Filipino and Ilonggo as she grew up in Bacolod, but few know that she's also very fluent in Chinese, specifically Fukienese; this she uses to the hilt as the lead solicitor of funds from the Chinese community, to the chagrin of FPJ's opposition rival Panfilo Lacson, once thought to have exclusive domain over Chinese funding. Recently Roces hosted a lunch at a five-star hotel to which she invited the biggest Binondo names; eyewitnesses said that after her Fukienese speech, amounts like P10 million and 20 million rained down.

* * *

GMA has the political machinery as evidenced by the support given to her by the politicians from various areas, while FPJ clearly relies on star power. That recent Manila Times front-page photo showing him in dark glasses with Mayon Volcano in the background, accompanied by comedians Sen. Tito Sotto and Dolphy and actors Eddie Gutierrez and Eddie Garcia, all garbed in FPJ jackets and dark glasses, tells it all. Show biz *na* show biz *ang dating*, which is scaring A, B and C voters to GMA's side.

By the way, some people have noticed that FPJ's main supporter, Sen. Edgardo Angara, has become scarce in the political scene, perhaps because of the controversy raised by FPJ's "handlers." FPJ's most visible handler now is Sotto. This has led to comments that the only thing worse than an FPJ presidency is having Sotto—whose professional life was mainly confined to being a low-flying comedian and who was once implicated in drug-trafficking by no less than then Sen. Tito Guingona—as FPJ's principal adviser.

* * *

The timing of the Transparency International report naming two homegrown politicians, Ferdinand Marcos and Joseph Estrada, among the 10 most corrupt officials in the world in recent decades couldn't be worse for the FPJ camp. Out of 10 most corrupt leaders in the world, two are Filipinos. The question now is, the opposition has been accusing GMA of all kinds of corruption, but how can they now do so, considering that prominent Marcos folks such as Rep. Imee Marcos, his loyalist generals and top officials, as well as the Estrada clan are all on FPJ's side?

* * *

In this star-struck country FPJ has that plus factor over the *masa*, and in fact reports say the results of a survey to be released just before the Holy Week will show the two top contenders still neck and neck. In such a tightly contested race, pundits opine that machinery—the support of politicians—will make the crucial difference. I realized that role for myself recently in a mountain area in Palawan where I accompanied PNOC officials who installed a solar home system in an unelectrified barangay. I asked the local folks whom they would vote for president, and they said, "*Kung ano po ang sasabihin ni* Baham *sa amin, doon kami.*" Reelectionist Rep. Baham Mitra gushed, "*Ganoon ba?*"

* * *

Former environment secretary and senator Heherson Alvarez is back with wife Cecile Guidote-Alvarez, after having her checked up at the Sloan-Kettering Cancer Institute in New York City, and he has promptly resumed his quixotic quest as an independent candidate for the Senate, against tremendous odds. Before they left two weeks ago I queried Alvarez on his plans and he said his political plans would hinge on how his wife's condition is. In NY, thanks to all the prayers from their relatives and friends, the biopsy of a nodule in Cecile's thyroid proved benign, while a "complex nodule" in the same area will have to be watched over some time before any intervention could be attempted. Her US doctors are also monitoring certain growths in her body, but they allowed her to come home under supervised protocol to be administered here by Dr. Fred Dungca, a NY-based "comrade-in-exile" of the Alvarezes. Now that she was made to promise not to go into the more stressful part of Sonny's campaign, Cecile's confining herself to soliciting support for him from her innumerable friends and fans around the country and leading his prayer brigade.

Sonny Alvarez relates that he spent the long hours of waiting in Sloan-Kettering talking to Cecile's fellow patients and he came out convinced that once he returns to the Senate he must push for a "Cancer Act" similar to that found in the US—in addition to all the environmental bills he's bent on passing. The "Cancer Act" is a comprehensive health bill that can provide a holistic, scientifically coordinated and humanitarian approach to prevent and address this killer disease afflicting both male and female Filipinos. "I suppose that if there can be a 'study now, pay later plan' such as what GMA is extending to senior college and university students," says Alvarez, "there can also be a chemotherapy now, pay later plan" for needy cancer patients.

Very brave, very smart

KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

Noralyn Mustafa

IT'S tough, President Macapagal-Arroyo says of her job, in her television spot of which there are two versions but with almost identical dialogue. "You have to be very brave and (pointing to her head) very smart." Wow.

At the very least, you've got to credit her for truth in advertising, although I do have some reservations about the "brave" part, because one's understanding of the word can be quite subjective, if not deceiving. Even cowardice can come disguised as bravery. But this is not about semantics; it's about being outsmarted.

Among the books on my night table are copies of the Philippine Journalism Review which the Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility sends me regularly, and for which I am truly grateful. For a journalist in the boondocks, every issue is worth its weight in gold. There is, too, another prized possession, a copy of "People Power Uli!—A Scrapbook About Edsa 2" published by the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism which the INQUIRER so thoughtfully sent me three years ago (I love this outfit).

The PJR critically monitors all newspapers quarterly; and the PCIJ's "People Power" as its foreword claims, "(compiled) the various multimedia ways in which Filipinos ousted a president. It includes jokes, text messages, advertisements, cartoons, poems, songs and front pages of websites that emerged in the last months of the Estrada presidency."

The past few months have been very eventful, with mind-boggling developments assaulting us almost daily, and so I decided to go through my accumulated file copies of the INQUIRER, hoping to see the bigger picture and maybe make some sense of this most chaotic of times. And here is what I got from the front pages:

Oct. 5, 2003—I'm running. Oct. 7—SC ruling on Kuratong case out anytime. Oct. 8—SC: Ping must stand trial for Kuratong. Oct. 9—Cojuangco scores victory at Sandigan. Oct. 15—Naia 3 extortion bared. Oct. 25—Gloria-Danding plot, says Joker. Oct. 26—Lakas—we didn't do it. Oct. 27—Davide declares war, GMA sheds neutrality, stands by SC chief.

Nov. 1—GMA on Erap—no political deals, only compassion. Nov. 10—Palace, PNP deny overkill in assault on Naia tower. Nov. 11—Malacañang ignores cries for Mendoza resignation. Nov. 13—GMA seeks peace reconciliation with Erap, Danding, Marcoses. Nov. 15—GMA offered to send Erap to US, Satur claims. Nov. 16—GMA to let Erap go to US. Nov. 17—Erap travel OK tied to GMA election bid—decision intended to win votes. Nov. 20—Palace woos Lopezes for the 'dream team.' Nov. 21—G factor crucial to Kabayan's decision to run as GMA's veep (accompanied by photo taken at Ad Congress, Club Camp John Hay, showing the "G factor," Gabby Lopez, raising the hand of GMA, aptly captioned "And the winner is...").

Dec. 1—Lakas exec (spokesperson Heherson Alvarez) questions FPJ citizenship. Dec. 2—Meralco to collect P2B from rate hike *Gov't grants Lopez firm 12 centavo increase per kWh.* Dec. 3—Palace: no political deal in power hike. Dec. 14—Pimentel warns of hi-tech fraud in automated polls. Dec. 15—GMA woos OFW vote in Hong Kong trip. Dec. 16—Gloria: meeting OFWs part of the job. Dec. 20—Amnesty plan very dangerous, GMA warned. ERC junks consumers' bid to stop Meralco hike. Dec. 24—Erap allowed to go to US *But court bars Christmas with Mom.* Dec. 30—Noli agrees to be GMA running mate.

Jan. 15—Osmeña says P2B greased SSS deal. Jan. 17—GMA told: Don't touch money *Rights victims want P683 million Marcos loot deposited in trust fund.* Jan. 22—FPJ records doctored. Manapat: no fabrication, just enhancement. Jan. 29—6 officers arrested for exposé vs. GMA—group denounces plot to derail President's rivals.

Feb. 1—Secret report bares plot to oust FPJ if he wins (referring to Isafp report on Campaign Plan Andres). Feb. 3—GMA allots P3B for PhilHealth program. Feb. 6—Palace clears Nani Perez *Criminal raps pushed by graft body thrown out.* Gov't sets aside P250M to keep RP safe from bird flu. Feb. 7—Palace firm in decision to clear Perez. Feb. 8—Abalos won't quit. Feb. 11—GMA appoints two new commissioners. Feb. 12—Abat mad; 25th death rites for son canceled. Feb. 13—GMA rivals cite links of 2 new poll execs to Mike A. Feb. 17—2 new poll execs want Poe barred. Feb. 22—GMA betrayed me thrice—Bro. Eddie.

March 6—Erap now in Tanay villa *GMA justifies virtual house arrest 'if within the law.'* March 7—GMA faces criminal raps *Private lawyers say Estrada's country-style detention illegal.* March 18—2 KNP Senate bets (Amina Rasul and Boots Anson-Roa) ask SC: Get GMA out. March 21—Explain bailout, GMA told *Opposition bets seek review of Maynilad's P8B 'jackpot deal.'* March 22—Sacking of Dolphy linked to bailout. March 24—Graft charges filed vs. GMA, Lopez firm. March 25—GMA to pursue gov't takeover of Maynilad. March 26—7th DQ case filed vs. GMA for misuse of road tax.

Through all these, administration spokespersons Ignacio Bunye and Mike Defensor emerged as the Denial Kings and on Max Soliven's resurrected television talk show "Impact 2004" on ANC, the President gave us viewers one more lesson on being very smart: "Those were campaign contributions deposited in the Jose Pidal account and it was closed before the anti-money laundering law went into effect. Was that illegal?"

People, start texting.

* * *

Comments to nm19@my.smart.com.ph

More on cheating and salaries

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

ONE reader e-mailed me the following in response to my column on cheating: "Re: Your column on cheating. You might be interested in an IPER survey (done in the 2001 elections) that found only 1 in 10 voters polled said they had been offered money for their vote. Of these, 7 in 10 said they accepted the money (and of those who accepted, not all voted for the candidate who bribed). So in effect the vote-buying margin is only 7 percent of the total vote, which makes it negligible except in the tightest of races. Most campaign operators also say the cheating margin is 5-10 percent. So in that sense, except in a very tight race or an extraordinarily dirty one, the election result is generally an expression of 'the popular will.'"

I also had the chance to have a brief discussion with Solita Monsod on my column on government salaries. She said a better way to appreciate the difference between government salaries in the past, and government salaries today, is to compare past government salaries to the minimum wage ordained by law at the time. By comparing the salary, say, of the President, to that of a janitor, and the janitor's to the minimum wage, you would be able to figure out how much larger the government salaries were compared to that earned by a minimum wage earner. Comparing those figures to present-day figures would also tell you how much government salaries have decreased.

For example, I have pretty complete figures for the year 1937, a time when government salaries were competitive and corruption was less rife. In 1937, the President of the Philippines earned P30,000 a year. The Speaker of the National Assembly earned P12,000 a year; an assemblyman, P5,000 a year. A janitor in the National Library earned P540 a year. The minimum wage in 1937 was P1 a day, which, if the person worked 25 days [illegible] P312 a year [illegible] earned 96.15 times more than a minimum wage earner; the Speaker, 38.46 times more than the minimum wage earner; an assemblyman, 16 times more; and a janitor, 1.73 times (almost twice) as much.

Today's minimum wage, in the National Capitol Region, if one works 22 to 26 days a month, is roughly P6,500 a month or P78,000 a year. If we used the proportions shown by the 1937 figures as ideal, this is what government officials and workers would be earning today: the President of the Philippines, P7,499,700 a year; the Speaker of the House, P2,999,880 a year; a congressman, P1,248,000 a year; a janitor should be earning P134,940 a year (or P11,245 a month).

Instead, of course, the President earns P300,000 a year today: or about 24 times less than what her predecessor was earning in 1937! A congressman earns P35,000 a month or P420,000 a year (more than the President, and not including a dizzying number of allowances and other perks their predecessors in 1937 did not have), or almost three times less than what a congressman was earning in 1937: which explains the large number of allowances and supplementary income congressmen sneak into current national budgets. Even our janitors should be earning almost twice the monthly minimum wage salary, and very few of [illegible] Although there are indeed a [illegible] the government earn in the neighborhood of P11,245 a month, which is what a janitor circa 1937 would be earning in today's pesos.

Obviously this means lower-ranking positions in the government have kept up with the standards of the past. It is in terms of the salaries of our highest officials, from President to congressman, that government salaries have lagged behind, becoming increasingly anachronistic and uncompetitive. In the future, should the Constitution and our laws be amended, government salaries should be defined in terms of percentages of the minimum wage, instead of in concrete peso terms. For example, the Constitution might specify that "The annual salary of the President of the Philippines shall be 95 times the annual minimum wage earned by a Filipino in the National Capital Region, who works 22 to 26 days a month." This would make salary increases dependent on the minimum wage authorized by the government, and automatically upgrade all government workers commensurate with how workers in the private sector are compensated.

At present, government salaries for higher level (director and above, particularly assistant secretaries and undersecretaries) positions are not competitive, which means one has to be extremely ambitious or independently wealthy, to consider it worth one's while to serve in government, particularly in an appointive capacity, or according to a fixed term. While government salaries can never beat those offered by the private sector, they should at least not be so far behind. For the President alone, P7 million a year is not what an equally competent executive might earn in a large corporation; but it is certainly a much more realistic level of compensation than the present P300,000 a year!

[illegible]

Subtle conditioning of the voters' mind

READERS' ADVOCATE

Raul J. Palabrica

WITH 41 days to go before the elections, the national and local candidates are up to their necks moving around, delivering speeches and preparing for the day of reckoning for their political ambitions.

More political advertisements will soon fill print and broadcast media. Additional posters, streamers and other campaign materials will be handed out to add to the tons of garbage produced daily.

Between now and April 25 (for presidential, vice-presidential and senatorial aspirants) and May 3 (for local candidates), expect to read or hear about surveys that purport to show that certain candidates are on the winning or losing track.

A reader, Eddie Vitug, expressed concern about the effect on the public of the surveys that the INQUIRER had earlier written about. He wrote: "I would like to comment on how your editors seemingly take these survey results with great merit and importance that you even put them on the front page.

"I just do not get what is all the fuss about these surveys. They do not offer any real information. Being a cynical voter, what positive information can they offer the electorate? For me, I think all they do are two things:

"First, surveys dangerously 'condition' the mind of the people on who is supposed to win. The candidates and electorate might fall into the error of taking these surveys as points of comparison with the official results.

"The surveys can be used by losing parties as the excuse to complain about their defeat. We should not forget that it is the certification of the Commission on Elections on who won that matters, not the research of the survey companies.

"Second, surveys can dangerously persuade people into choosing the wrong candidates. Voters should vote for their chosen candidates on their own merit and not because they have a fighting chance.

Effect

"Instead of writing about surveys, why don't you make an objective profiling of the candidates? In this way, you give the electorate not perceptive or maliciously persuasive information but REAL information."

I share the reader's observations.

These so-called monitoring devices to determine the people's pulse before the elections play on the bandwagon mentality of most Filipinos. Or the perception that a vote cast for a candidate is "wasted" if that candidate loses.

Ergo, following this line of reasoning, if you want your votes to count, vote only for the candidates who, according to the survey results, have the strongest chance of winning. Never mind if that candidate is immoral, indecent and intellectually deprived. What matters is he or she, based on the survey, might win the election.

Unfortunately, ignoring surveys is easier said than done. They have already carved a niche in our electoral system. Political parties and candidates use them in mapping out their campaign strategies. For political analysts and sociologists, surveys are effective tools in determining the people's thoughts about certain issues in our society other than the choice of their candidates.

On the part of media, surveys provide information that deserve to be made known to the public. To those who enjoy or cannot avoid reading news about surveys, here are some things that you should take into consideration:

Credibility

1. **Reputation of the survey group.** Not every organization or outfit that claims to be engaged in research is qualified to conduct an honest and reliable poll survey. Evaluating the voters' preferences requires academic training, expertise and competent personnel.

The list of credible survey organizations is short. If track record and credentials of the people behind them are used as criteria, the more trustworthy and credible survey groups are Social Weather Stations, Asian Research Organization and Pulse Asia, not necessarily arranged in the order of credibility.

If an outfit other than those mentioned conducts the survey, it would be advisable for the readers to take the survey results with a grain of salt.

2. **Format of the questions.** The answer to a survey question is influenced to a great extent by the way it is phrased. A person's reply to a question couched in positive words will be different from one that uses negative words.

A question that contains derogatory information about a candidate is expected to elicit a negative response. The question "will you vote for 'X' candidate if it is proven that he stole money from his business partners" will undoubtedly invite a "no" answer. It will be unfair to count that answer as an indication of lack of support for the affected candidate.

If the question is meant to favor a candidate, the question can be phrased in such a way that the candidate's good qualities are used as backgrounder, then the voter is asked if those qualities would make a difference in deciding who to vote for. The most likely reply to that question is a "yes." The shrewd survey evaluator will report that answer as an endorsement of the candidate.

3. **Survey sponsor.** The tried-and-tested survey groups have no qualms about disclosing the names of the people or organizations that engage their services. With a reputation to protect and nurture, these groups are least susceptible to the idea of manipulating survey results to meet the objectives of their sponsors.

If the sponsor is somebody who has links to the candidate who got good marks in the survey, or is an unknown organization with an impressive sounding name, it would be the better part of discretion to treat the survey as a political advertisement.

4. **Period covered by the survey.** The timing of the survey is critical to the credibility of the results. The results of a survey conducted before the deadline for the filing of certificates of candidacy are worthless when published three weeks before the election.

The closer the date the survey was conducted is to the date of publication of the results, the better. Like news, survey results become stale when not published immediately.

At the end of the day, what matters is not what the survey results show but the voters' appreciation of who among the candidates deserve to be elected to the posts they are aspiring for.

* * *

The readers' advocate may be reached at the following address: "The Readers' Advocate" c/o Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Avenue corner Yague and Mascardo Streets, Makati City." Or through fax nos. 897-4793 to 94, or readersadvocate@inquirer.com.ph.

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[illegible]

Commodities regularly watched

THIS is in response to the letter sent by Frederico G. Luchico Jr. last March 1 regarding measures to curb shortages on basic items.

At the outset, we in the Department of Trade and Industry would like to clear the perception that our department and the Department of Agriculture (DA) are at loggerheads on the importation of certain food commodities.

Agriculture Secretary Cito Lorenzo and I are closely working together to ensure that food supply and prices remain stable in the marketplace. Recently, the DA assigned an undersecretary to participate in the DTI-chaired National Price Coordinating Council (NPCC). This move gives the DA a high level representation in the NPCC and ensures the body's quick response on issues of price and supply of basic agricultural commodities. Other departments and agencies are also represented and taking active roles in the body.

Also, we would like to assure readers that the DTI is regularly monitoring the production and supply of basic necessities and prime commodities to make sure that there are enough of them in the market shelves and that these are affordable to consumers. We are likewise in constant talks with producers and trade associations to verify reports and discern the actual production/supply figures.

Meanwhile, "peso checkpoints," if there are any, can be minimized or eliminated if traders will report and cooperate with, proper authorities. The Philippine National Police has dedicated telephone hotlines to receive complaints; these are numbers 721-8613, 725-376 and 721-4153.

Concerning price tags, the DTI still requires retail outlets to prominently display price tags on individual consumer goods being sold. Please note however, that the DTI has issued Department Administrative Order 09 Series of 2002 exempting goods on individual price tagging, provided these are too small or the nature of these goods makes it impractical to place an individual price tag or label. Products exempted from price tagging are however, required to be listed in a price list or poster near them. These lists or posters must indicate retail prices and product specifications like size volume, content, diameter, etc.

Moreover, the shelf price tagging system is allowed, provided an itemized receipt or cash register tape is used stating the description, size, quantity and individual price of goods purchased. Retail stores also need to install at least one price verification counter or a similar electronic system that is strategically located inside the store to augment shelf pricing.

Finally on the basket of "basic or prime commodities," we wish to inform readers that the National Statistics Office started this January a new series of monthly Consumer Price Index using a revised basket of goods and services with reference year shifting from 1994 to 2000. This was done to reflect changes in the country's consumption patterns. The set of weights assigned to certain goods and services was also changed. To account for the popular use of cell phones, for example, the consumption basket share for the transportation and communication sector was raised from 4.81 percent to 7.51 percent.

—CESAR V. PURISIMA,
secretary,
Department of Trade
and Industry,
385 Sen. Gil Puyat Ave.,
Makati City

SM, DBP appealing Baguio, Tagaytay cases

THIS refers to the Cocktales column titled "Sy loses SM Baguio, Taal Vista cases" last March 3, and an article titled "City stakes claim over SM Baguio lot" last March 8, discussing some of the details and the implications of the decision of the Makati Regional Trial Court on the reversal of the sale of the SM Baguio and Taal Vista properties by the Development Bank of the Philippines to SM Investment Corp. (SMIC).

In this regard, may we inform you that the bank and SMIC have already initiated proceedings to appeal the decision of the Makati RTC to the Court of Appeals.

With due respect to the court, we strongly believe that the merits of the case may not have been fully appreciated, particularly with regard to the testimonial and documentary evidence duly presented during the hearings. For example:

1. We feel that errors may have been committed in the appreciation of the evidence and the applicable laws such that the conclusion on the amount of obligation was grossly understated vis-à-vis the entire loan obligation to the DBP.

2. Similarly, we feel that the conclusions and computations with regard to the application of the fire insurance proceeds may have been erroneous. After the foreclosure, DBP became the owner of the property, and following the concept of absolute ownership, the fire insurance proceeds should belong to the bank. Applying the insurance proceeds to the indebtedness of Resort Hotels Corp. is erroneous because after foreclosure, the said account is considered closed.

The DBP maintains that the sale is legal and binding. May we further clarify that SMIC will continue to be in possession of the properties until the case is finally resolved by the higher court.

Inasmuch as the bank is already preparing its case before the Court of Appeals, we leave it to its decision for the early and judicious resolution of the case. Pending this development, therefore, we would prefer not to comment further about the merits of this case outside of the court with due respect to the sub judice rule.

—LEONORA A. FERNANDEZ,
senior assistant vice president,
Corporate Affairs,
Development Bank
of the Philippines,
Makati City

Clark, Subic toxic waste issues raised anew

NOW that the toxic waste problem left behind after the US bases pullout at Subic and Clark has resurfaced in the local broadsheets, there is much fuss raised again about this hazardous waste.

Fatal case-diseases had been reported in the major dailies linking toxic wastes to malignancy, leukemia, kidney diseases, cerebral palsy, various skin ailments, abortions and even still births. But not a single case had been proven directly caused by these toxic substances.

The only certified lung diseases which were examined through history and repeated chest X-rays at the former US Naval Dispensary at Cubi point were cases of prolonged exposure to "asbestos" especially at the Ship Repair Facilities.

A number of base workers have been referred to the Lung Center of the Philippines for a second opinion on a particular disease known as asbestosis. Some asbestosis patients had been misdiagnosed as pulmonary tuberculosis because of similar chest X-ray findings and cough symptoms. The only confirmatory test is a lung tissue biopsy.

There is no specific treatment for asbestosis but only symptomatic relief. Fifty percent of those who develop the disease end up with lung cancer. In not a few cases, a number of them were able to get compensation from the US Navy with the assistance of Filipino and American lawyers.

I was a member of the hospital staff of the then US Naval Hospital as senior consultant-lecturer for a period of six years for the Resident Physicians of the Philippine Academy of Family Physicians.

—ELISEO R. REBLANDO, M.D.,
medical director,
Sta. Veronica Hospital,
Olongapo City

FPJ and KNP's platform of gov't

WITH REGARD to Joel Rocamora's contention in his commentary "Can FPJ translate reel into real?" (PDI, 2/22/4) that Fernando Poe Jr. does not say much because he has no government platform to speak of, we wish to point out that the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino unveiled such a program during its kick-off rally at the Cuneta Astrodome last Feb. 10.

Based on the pre-campaign public consultations of KNP standard-bearer FPJ as well as inputs from various sectoral groups, the united opposition's platform consists of broad initiatives to attack the long-festering ills of our country. The KNP platform is anchored on winning back public trust and confidence in government via a slew of measures designed to uphold the rule of law, improve public governance, promote full transparency in government transactions, stamp out official corruption, restore peace and order, and deliver the minimum basic needs of our people.

We partly agree with Rocamora's argument that FPJ's biggest disadvantage in building a local machinery is that he is running against an incumbent, but this is also a big advantage for FPJ because the incumbent President happens to be a highly unpopular one whose reputation and credibility have been tarnished by her gross mismanagement of the economy and her ties to relatives, allies and sycophants who have figured in one major scam after another.

Too much election-related politicking and politicization of democratic institutions by the Macapagal administration have made our people lose their faith in government. If FPJ and the KNP team have been receiving the red-carpet treatment in the places they have been to in the first two weeks of the campaign, it is simply because our people believe—and identify with—FPJ's central message on the urgency of winning back the public's trust and confidence not only in their government but also in themselves as Filipinos.

—RODOLFO T. REYES,
head, FPJ's Media Bureau,
Rm. 606, 21 San Miguel Ave
cor. Lourdes St.,
Pasig City

Why lethal injections once again

THE GENTEEL notion of using drugs could perhaps give the death penalty a real shot in the arm.

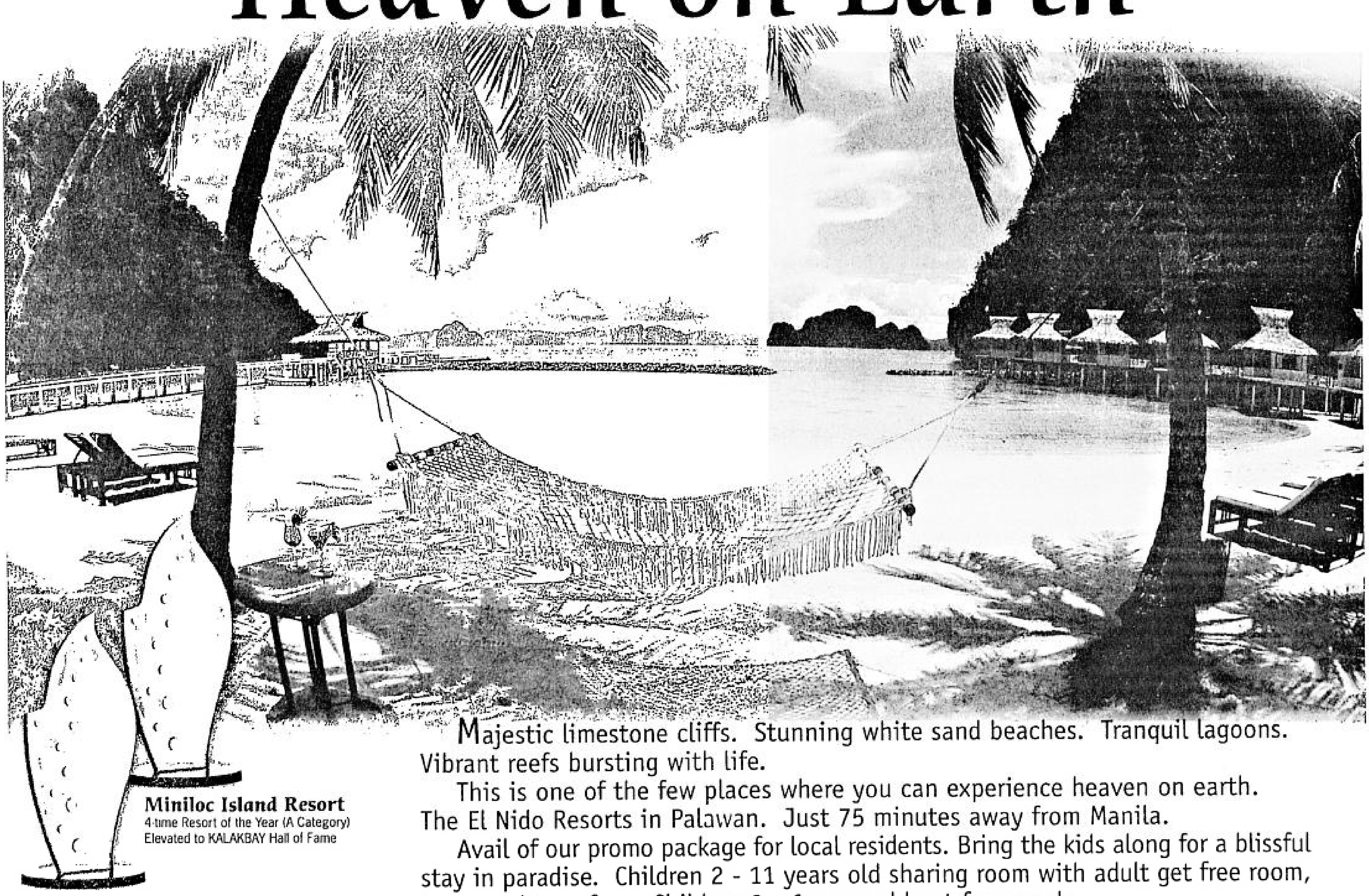
In 1977, the state of Oklahoma instituted lethal injection as a prescribed form of official killing. Texas enacted a similar statute followed by several states, Idaho, Florida, South Carolina, Washington and Nevada. Oklahoma's measure provides for a dual administration of drugs, one to render a prisoner unconscious and the second to kill when he is unable to feel any pain. A supporter explained that it would be just like going in, lying down and going to sleep. It would no longer be like the grisly spectacle of roasting flesh, bulging eyes or squirting blood.

Executing criminals quickly with lethal injection is all the more incredible given the fact that governments rarely do anything quickly. Executions take months and years to accomplish. Those years in prison make a death sentence the most protracted and hideous torture ever conceived and is also the most expensive. All the trials, appeals, petitions, special housing requirements and elaborate ceremonies that preclude a lethal injection would cost more than a lifetime in prison.

Unlike the guillotine, firing squad, electric chair and gas chamber, this latest innovation is more "humanitarian" and the best that modern science can offer, although the executions fail to quench the thirst for bloody revenge or society's moral outrage against the crime.

—PETE N. BELTRAN,
38 West Avenue, QC

Heaven on Earth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23 Aurora St., Old Albay District
Legazpi City
Tel. No. (052) 820-8402
Fax No. (052) 820-1274
E-mail: inq_bicol@inquirer.com.ph

Across the NATION

E-mail: pr_provincial_news@inquirer.com.ph
Assistant Editor **Tony Bergonia**

VISAYAS BUREAU
c/o Cebu Daily News
18-15 Escario St., Cebu City
Tel. Nos. (032) 233-0346/233-0349
Fax No. (032) 232-9938
E-mail: pdivis@skyinet.net

MINDANAO BUREAU
FEP Printing Corp. Bldg.
Ma-a Road, Davao City
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Fax No. (082)244-1771
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Hybrid rice plan proves a success in Isabela farms

By Villamor Visaya
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

CAUAYAN CITY—Isabela staged a rice-corn festival on Wednesday to celebrate the province's bountiful harvests despite last year's losses due to the effects of typhoon Harurot.

Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo Jr., the affair's guest, said the festival was a sign that local farmers had recovered from last year's setback, where agricultural losses due to Harurot were pegged at P1.5 billion.

"Isabelinos are really that industrious as you can see with the abundant rice and corn harvests. *Nakabangon na kayo mula sa bagyong* Harurot (You have recovered from the effects of typhoon Harurot)," he said.

The festival also showcased rice by-products, such as native rice cakes like *patupat, linapet, binallay and malagkit.*

Lorenzo said Isabela is Cagayan Valley's top performer in hybrid rice farming, with 2,100 hectares devoted to hybrid rice cultivation.

Last year, Isabela, considered as one of the country's major rice granaries, ranked second in production behind Nueva Ecija.

Isabela farmers harvested 938,400 metric tons (MT) of rice while Nueva Ecija recorded 1.1 million MT.

Isabela also topped the corn-producing provinces in the country with a harvest of 580,000 MT last year. Bukidnon ranked second with 497,000 MT, followed by Lanao del Sur and South Cotabato with 360,000 MT and 335,000 MT, respectively.

Increased harvest was noted in the 60-hectare demonstration farm for hybrid rice direct seeding technology in Barangay San Francisco here, provincial agriculture officials said.

Lorenzo praised Isabela farmers for leading in the hybrid rice direct seeding technique, which, he said, led to farmers' higher yield and income.

The technique has reduced seed input because it uses about 20 to 30-kilogram hybrid seeds per hectare compared with the 100-kilogram per hectare used for traditional or inbred seeds.

Lorenzo said this meant a savings of at least P1,500 per hectare or P90,000 for the 60-hectare demonstration farm.

Local agriculturists said the direct seeding technology offers an advantage because it shortens cropping time, which normally ranges from 116 to 120 days.

Lorenzo said the technique would offer farmers an alternative to the traditional inbred procedure, which is labor and capital intensive.

"The hybrid rice direct seeding technique can be considered a farmers' technology breakthrough since it has been (used) in farms in the (provinces) that have bountiful harvests," he said.

"Isabela may dislodge Nueva Ecija as the leading rice producer in the country. *Kaya 'nyo ba* (can you do it)?" Lorenzo asked farmers here.

He said hybrid rice tastes better than the Jasmine rice of Thailand. He also said Japanese traders wanted to buy hybrid rice from the country.

Arthur Yap, National Food Authority chief, assured farmers here that the government had earmarked funds to buy palay from local farmers.

Groups condemn assault on local radio stations

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—The National Union of Journalists in the Philippines (NUJP) and Ilagan Bishop Sergio Utleg have condemned the closure by the local government of two radio stations owned by Bombo Radyo in Cauayan City, Isabela.

Radio stations dzNC Bombo Radyo-Cauayan and its sister station, dwIT-FM, were ordered closed by the city government on March 24 five hours after it resumed its broadcast. The stations were earlier ordered closed by the city government in February.

In a statement, NUJP national vice chair Inday Espina-Varona said the closure of the stations was "a little more than a form of political vendetta."

"The Isabela case highlights a pattern of grassroots media repression," claimed Varona.

Other cases

She said similar cases are happening in other areas like the temporary shutdown and attempts to close operations of radio stations in Bukidnon and in Mati and Bagangga in Davao Oriental.

"Local chief executives are flexing their powers to gag a critical press and the practice only serves to further narrow the democratic space in this country," said Varona.

In an interview with radio station dyOK in Iloilo City, a rival station of Bombo Radyo, Cauayan City Mayor Ceasar Dy said he ordered the closure because the stations' management had failed to submit documents necessary for business permits to operate the stations.

Dy said he was ready to face any consequences of his actions against the radio stations.

But Bishop Utleg said the reasons cited by the city government in closing the stations were "all flimsy."

"Certain sectors of the government do not want the media or anybody for that matter to question their actions and expose their anomalies," Utleg said in a statement.

Appeal

He urged Dy to allow the reopening of the station "in the soonest possible time."

Bombo Radyo has denied that it failed to comply with the requirements of a business permit.

In a statement aired by the network's flagship station dyFM based in Iloilo City, Bombo Radyo said it would not blink amid the use of alleged "terrorism" by Dy.

The radio network said it would defend itself in a "legal and decent way" against the "attacks."

Even as it stood by Bombo Radyo in the closure of its two stations, the NUJP also called on the network to respect press freedom and the rights of its employees especially the dismissed employees of its station in Tacloban City.

"The NUJP reminds Bombo Radyo that it cannot cry out on behalf of press freedom one moment, and initiate its own act of repression of media workers' rights at the same time," said Varona, as she urged the network to withdraw the criminal charges it filed against around 28 former employees.

Bombo Radyo closed down its Tacloban City station early last year citing huge financial losses. But its former employees have accused the network of union busting.

Media groups have expressed disgust over a deadlier form of attack on press freedom—the killing of journalists, mostly those from the provinces.

HOLYWEEK GETAWAY
APRIL 8-11 (4 DAYS / 3 NIGHTS)

MANILA-SUBIC-CRUIZE
✓ Cruise
✓ Land Transfer (Orion-Subic)
✓ Mt. Samat Cross Tour
✓ 6 Meals (3 Lunch & 3 Dinner)
✓ World Class Concert @ Casa San Miguel
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Police arrest fake doc

LEGAZPI CITY—A top official of the Professional Regulations Commission (PRC) regional office here said operatives of PRC and the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) based in Naga City have arrested a fake psychiatrist who had practiced for 26 years.

PRC Bicol legal officer Jose Leo Vega identified the suspect as Efren Vida, 51, resident of Barangay Sabang in Naga City.

Vida was arrested on March 10 in an entrapment operation inside his clinic while in front of waiting patients and while about to inject medicine to one of them.

Vega said Vida established his clinic and started treating patients in the early 1980s using at least three different license numbers.

Vida's arrest was a result of various complaints filed at the local police office. *Ronnie Lorejo, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Cops kill 2 drug suspects in raid on Cotabato house

COTABATO CITY—Police officers shot dead Wednesday two suspected big-time drug traffickers during a raid on their hideout in Pikit, North Cotabato.

Supt. Melchor Loyola, North Cotabato police director, identified the slain suspects as Tingtingan Ladturan and Wahab Pelaez, both residents of Barangay Batulawan.

Loyola said policemen, backed by Army and Marine soldiers, were serving a search warrant on the suspects around 2 p.m., but instead of allowing them in, the suspects and three other companions fired shots.

Loyola said nobody was hurt on the government side after the shooting.

The three other suspects, identified as Abdullah Pasandalan, Abubakar Buat and Usop Sagindigan, managed to escape.

Loyola said they recovered two M-16 Armalite rifles, 20-gauge shotgun, caliber 38 and caliber .45 pistol, military uniforms, assorted ammunition, eight sachets of shabu and other drugs paraphernalia.

He said illegal drugs in Pikit come from nearby towns of Maguindanao province.

Loyola said the raiding team recovered two M-16 rifles, eight sachets of shabu, a .38 caliber revolver, an improvised 12-gauge shotgun, assorted bullets and several drug paraphernalia.

Chief Supt. Antonio Billones, Central Mindanao Police Director, told reporters in General Santos City that the raid was part of the police's intensified campaign against the proliferation of illegal drugs in the region.

Billones said the raid was launched following weeks of surveillance on the suspects. *Rosa May de Guzman and Aquiles Zonio, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

New execs named in land title probe

BAGUIO CITY—President Macapagal-Arroyo has formed the third set of National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) commissioners to investigate the supposed distribution this year of irregular ancestral land titles.

The titles, according to an NCIP official, were issued by the administration of deposed President Joseph Estrada.

The INQUIRER exposed in 2001 the existence of "midnight titles" which were signed by the outgoing commission during Estrada's term.

Ms Macapagal, when confronted by reports that around 600 irregular titles to ancestral domain and land claims all over the country are now being sold to speculators, chided Estrada.

"I have had to do a lot to make changes to turn around the mess I had inherited," Ms Macapagal said in a recent press conference here.

An NCIP official said the President reappointed Reuben Lingating, the second commissioner to chair the NCIP under Ms Macapagal, but she has yet to appoint a new chair.

Ms Macapagal also reappointed Commissioners Lagtum Pasag, who represents Mindoro, and Corazon Espino, who represents Cagayan. *Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

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Mogul makes pitch for technology in rare appearance

By Raj Padilla
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—Highlighting them as the country's ticket to success, business tycoon Lucio Tan has vowed to help promote science and technology even better.

At last Saturday's college commencement program of the Western Visayas College of Science and Technology (WVCST) in La Paz, Iloilo City, Tan vowed to continue to do his share as he encouraged the members of the graduating class to "become the promoters of development thinking through science and technology."

Tan spoke before 1,280 graduates and some 5,000 spectators who were curious to see one of the most successful taipans in the country.

"In doing so, you honor this school and its vision—that is, to be the center of excellence in science and technology in Western Visayas," said Tan, who was conferred the honorary degree of Doctor of Technology Management.

"For my part, this degree that has been conferred upon me obliges me, too, to work for the same cause: Promote development thinking through science and technology. I would gladly continue doing so, to the best of my abilities and resources," said a grateful and beaming Tan.

DEADLY CATCH EV ESPIRITU/PDI NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU
A fisherman shows off a rare, but deadly catch—a puffer fish which he caught in waters off Santiago Cove in Santiago City, Ilocos Sur. The puffer fish contains lethal toxins and people have been reported to have died after eating it.

Gov seeks defeat of party list groups linked to Left

KIDAPAWAN CITY—North Cotabato Gov. Emmanuel Piñol has urged his constituents not to vote for party-list groups identified with the communist rebels in protest of the killing of a village chair in Makilala, North Cotabato.

Speaking during the necrological services for chair Maximo Ravina of Barangay Rodero, Piñol called on his constituents to reject party-list organizations clearly identified with the communist New People's Army.

Piñol called as leftists party-list groups such as Anak Pawis, Bayan Muna and Anak Bayan.

"These groups identified with the Left are not worthy of the votes of the people of North Cotabato, especially in the town of Makilala," he told The Mindanao Cross, a weekly tabloid in Cotabato City.

Piñol said he wanted the party-list groups that he tagged as leftists to feel that the people of Cotabato would not tolerate the "demonic" act of killing innocent village officials who are protecting their people.

Police said communist rebels executed Ravina a week ago in Makilala because he campaigned among candidates to reject the payment of permit to campaign fees imposed by NPA guerrillas on politicians running for local positions.

Piñol, who is seeking reelection as provincial executive, said the people should not be afraid to speak for the truth.

"Let us unite and go forward for one common goal . . . to enhance development for the betterment of our children," he said.

The NPA, in a statement sent to the local media, admitted killing Ravina because he was allegedly providing the military with information on NPA activities in Makilala.

Ricardo Fermiza, NPA spokesperson in North Cotabato, said Ravina was found guilty by an NPA court.

Piñol said despite Ravina's murder, peace and development efforts in Makilala, a hinterland town at the foot of Mt. Apo, the country's highest peak, must continue to show to the rebels that the government is addressing poverty.

Edwin Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau

SUSPICION OF PIRACY

US firm in Clark assails raid of NBI agents as 'Gestapo-like'

CLARK SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE—The American firm Cyber City Teleservices decried last Wednesday's raid by National Bureau of Investigation agents on its offices on the claim that it had allegedly infringed on copyright by using unlicensed personal computers (PCs) in its call centers.

"(Our company) was attacked by force and at gunpoint by NBI agents," the Cyber City said in a statement on Thursday.

"This is sad for foreign investors in the Philippines," said the company, one of the big locators in this American military base-turned-special economic zone.

Warrant

The office of Clark Development Corp. vice president Jose Victor Luciano said the raid was made on the strength of a search warrant. A lawyer representing the Microsoft Singapore, which filed a complaint against Cyber City, accompanied the agents.

But the NBI team failed to recover at least 20 computer units said to be lacking in licenses.

Cyber City refused to give up the units, saying it had "purchased licenses for every PC set in this company." It also cited the possible disruptions on its operations and services that are global in reach and scope.

Its call centers, operated by Filipino employees, facilitate and direct phone messages to and from many parts of the world.

Giving more weight on the second reason, CDC president Emmanuel Angeles negotiated with NBI Director Reynaldo Wycoco to defer the seizure of the computer units.

No seizure

At 9 p.m. Wednesday, the CDC reported that not one unit had been taken out of the Cyber City premises near the Ninoy Aquino Boulevard here.

Some 3,000 Cyber City workers staged a protest rally in a bid to stop the confiscation of the computers.

According to Cyber City, the raid was the "error of someone who concluded that we lacked Microsoft licenses."

"People should first ask before they attack a successful innocent company," the company statement said. It criticized the conduct of the raid, pointing out that its employees were "shocked and terrified" when the NBI men "barged in." *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Well-loved Mindoro priest dies

FR. WALFREDO Mercado Arias of San Teodoro, Oriental Mindoro died on March 23 at the age of 52.

The well-loved Father Arias was the first diocesan priest to serve as rector of the St. Augustine Minor Seminary in Calapan, Oriental Mindoro from 1982 to 1986. He spent 27 years in the priesthood.

The former parish priest of Managpi in Calapan City was widely credited with setting up the diocese's communication and information technology system that brought the St. Augustine Minor Seminary up-to-date in the modernizing world of telecommunications.

Father Arias is survived by brothers Mauro, Eagle and Dennis and sister Pilar.

He will be buried on March 31 (Wednesday) at the clergy cemetery of the St. Augustine Seminary in Calapan City after a 2 p.m. Mass.

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VELASCO

TRIAS

Camile's real, Jasmine's sweet, says losing finalist

From page A1

Hawaiian girl. She doesn't cuss."

Matthew Rogers, an "American Idol" finalist who became the latest to get the boot last Wednesday, thus described the two Filipino-Americans, Camile Velasco and Jasmine Trias, who are still in the running.

In a phone interview with the INQUIRER, Rogers, a mortgage banker who played football in college, revealed for the first time details about life as a finalist in the United States' top singing talent search, which is telecast worldwide.

He said he felt very disappointed when he and Velasco were called onstage in the second round of eliminations last week as the pair who got the smallest number of viewer votes. Television audiences in America pick the finalists in the last leg of the competition and, ultimately, the winner.

"Camile .and I were from the same pre-finals group, and we are pretty close," Rogers said. "She is like a little sister to me. I couldn't believe we were standing there among the bottom three (the third was 16-year-old Diana DeGarmo)."

Coolest dad

Rogers said he was very impressed with Jasmine's father Rudy. Since Jasmine is a minor, Rudy, a Caviteño, is among the parents allowed to stay in a mansion where the finalists are housed.

"He is the coolest dad I have ever seen!" Rogers exclaimed. "He watches over Jasmine and even makes me a veggie omelet every morning. He says, 'Good morning, Matt!,' pats me on the back and proceeds to prepare my breakfast. He is so cool."

The contestants and their parents live in harmony, Rogers said. "We all get along well. Everybody is so respectful. All the parents are so cool."

He said the 16- and 17-year-olds in the group behaved "more mature" than the average children their age. "In fact," he added, "I act more like a 16-year-old than they do." Rogers is now 25; he made the cut-off age of 24 during the auditions.

"Jasmine, Leah (LaBelle, who got the boot in the first elimination round), Diana (DeGarmo) and John (Stevens) are 16 or 17 years old," he pointed out, "but they all act mature for their age."

Life of a finalist

Rogers described a typical day in the life of an AI finalist: "Our busiest day is Thursday, after the Wednesday evening show (in the Philippines, AI is telecast on cable television Tuesdays and Thursdays, five episodes delayed). We wake up at 6:30 in the morning. A van takes us to the studio at 7. We get there by 7:15, have breakfast at 8, and then go to the dressing rooms to choose our songs and prepare for rehearsals."

Rehearsals start at 10. "We are given one hour each," Rogers continued. "So if there are 12 finalists, that means 12 hours of rehearsals. There's a lot of down time while waiting for your rehearsal time, so you either study your song or read. After lunch, we do interviews for the video clips and then we go shopping!"

He announced that the CD of the top 12 finalists would be out on sale April 21.

Loser's advice

To the AI aspirants, his advice: "Remember that you have 30 seconds to make the three judges notice you out of 30,000 contestants. Once you are in the show, stick to what got you in. Don't steer away from home. My fault was, I strayed from what I originally did, and now I've paid the price."

In last Tuesday's competition show (there are two shows every week in this final round; Wednesday is the results show, where one contestant is eliminated), Velasco, wearing a midrib top, jacket and denims, and large hoop earrings that highlighted her now straight hair, sang the Eagles' "Desperado."

"It was all right. It was jerky. I didn't get it," judge Randy Jackson commented.

Judge Paula Abdul said, "I see the soulfulness coming back in your voice."

The acerbic judge Simon Cowell snapped, "I have a horrible feeling that's going to sound out of tune to the viewers at home. You're not conquering your nervousness. You're not comfortable."

Jackson and Abdul ganged up on Cowell. Abdul said, "I felt she was coming through." Jackson protested, "She did look more comfortable."

Not really impressive

Velasco did seem more relaxed. She looked lovely and kept smiling.

Trias, in a red strap dress, sang "Breathe." For the first time, the petite Filipino-American, who was one of the early favorites, did not quite impress the judges.

While admitting that he was a fan, Jackson said, "I think the key is wrong for you." Abdul agreed, "You have a pitch problem."

Cowell pointed out that Trias was playing it "very safe." It was "a little bit boring," he said. "Very daddy-ish. We're looking for a pop star."

Program host Ryan Seacrest announced that last Tuesday's competition show had again broken records, with US viewers totaling 30 million, and 19.5 million votes cast.

P15-B take of Maynilad hit

From page A1

reason why the MWSS has not been able to pay its loans. This is, of course, inexplicable considering that there seems to be no dispute with respect to this P5-billion annual collection," he said.

Mauricio said the AEPA that Maynilad had been collecting from its customers amounted to P4.21 per cubic meter.

"Its collection of this AEPA generates about P1.1 billion a year, but this was supposed to have ended in December 2002. Again inexplicably, however, Maynilad has continued the collection up to now, almost two years beyond the time it was allowed to do so," he said.

The collection from consumers of P4.07 per cubic meter in FCDA to help Maynilad recover foreign exchange losses was also supposed to have ended in December 2002, according to Mauricio.

He asked why President Macapagal-Arroyo, through the MWSS, allowed these collections to continue.

"All of the foregoing, if proved to be true, would inevitably establish probable cause in this case that the respondents granted unwarranted benefits to Maynilad and caused undue injury to the Filipino people," Mauricio said, referring to the graft charges he filed against Ms Macapagal and other officials on March 22.

He said Ms Macapagal caused the government "undue injury" and gave Maynilad "unwarranted benefits" in what he called the P8-billion "bailout" of the water utility.

Legal dispute

The MWSS and Maynilad had been locked in a legal dispute since last year after the water utility announced that it was ending its concession agreement with the MWSS.

To break the deadlock, the government through the MWSS reached a compromise agreement with Maynilad this month.

Under the deal, Benpres, the holding firm of the Lopezes, would write off its holdings in Maynilad, its joint venture with the French firm Ondeo Services, formerly Suez Water.

The plan also provides for the conversion of more than P7 billion in unpaid concession fees to the MWSS into equity, giving the MWSS majority control of Maynilad.

The compromise agreement is still subject to approval by the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Quezon City Regional Trial Court and the National Economic and Development Authority.

Despite questions about the legality of the deal, the MWSS board approved it on March 22. The agency's legal consultant, Leonardo Amores, had warned the board members that approving the deal would make them answerable for graft and lead to a conflict of interest situation in which the MWSS would be regulating a firm that it owned.

Amores said the deal would result in a loss of P7.8 billion to the MWSS as it would get 63 percent of the capital stock of an insolvent corporation.

Defensible

Malacañang yesterday insisted that the government's takeover of the bankrupt Maynilad from the Lopez family and Ondeo was "defensible" in any court of law.

In an interview aired over RMN radio, the President's spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said Amores' warning was only one of the legal opinions received by government on the matter.

The majority of the legal opinions obtained by the MWSS declared the deal defensible, noting that the concession agreement spelled out a possible government takeover and the Constitution allows the state to take over a public utility under certain circumstances, according to Bunye.

Like doctor's opinion

He said legal opinions were similar to doctors' opinions. "If a patient does not agree with his physician's opinion, he seeks a second or third opinion and this is similar to what the MWSS did," he said.

Bunye reiterated that the government's main consideration in the deal was to ensure the continued supply of clean water to more than half of Metro Manila's population working or residing in the west zone.

Mauricio said Amores' opinion had made his graft case against Ms Macapagal and other officials "stronger because it would show that even prior to the moves to effect a bailout they have been told that this is already illegal."

"There is no excuse now with the disclosure by the lawyers that they had been warned. This is their own lawyer; their lawyer that they have hired to protect their interest and to tell them what is right and what is wrong legally," the senatorial candidate said.

Correct any wrong

In a separate supplemental motion he filed on Friday, Mauricio asked Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo to immediately initiate an inquiry, "and, thereafter, for the results thereof to be used in determining probable cause" for the filing of graft cases against Ms Macapagal.

In Baguio City, presidential candidate Sen. Panfilo Lacson vowed to run after those responsible for the alleged sweetheart deal between the government and Maynilad if he wins the May 10 elections.

He said the deal should be junked if investigation shows that it was grossly disadvantageous to the government.

"It is incumbent upon any government to correct any wrong," Lacson said. "We'd not just do away with it, but also run after those responsible." *With reports from Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Norman Bordadora*

Dolphy twits GMA for feigning ignorance

From page A1

pagal-Arroyo, whom his longtime friend, actor Fernando Poe Jr. is challenging in the May 10 elections.

"*Dugay na sa Malacañang, tonto pa guihapon* (Still dumb after a long time in Malacanang)," the 75-year-old comedian taunted Ms Macapagal in Cebuano during a Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino grand rally on Saturday night.

As usual, the rally was studded with movie and television stars—a veritable "Eat Bulaga" episode on location, down to the Sex Bomb Dancers.

Police estimated the crowd gathered at the Cebu City Sports Stadium at 6,000.

"Why should we vote someone who seems to know nothing?" Dolphy said in Filipino.

But he wasn't referring to the lack of intellectual or managerial ability on the part of Ms Macapagal, who is a trained economist. Rather, he called attention to her insistence that she was clueless about ABS-CBN television station's reported move to scrap his comedy series, "Home Along Da Airport."

The network later clarified that the show would continue airing through August—when Dolphy's talent contract expires—but that there was no assurance it would be extended.

Reports of the show being axed were linked to the government bailout of Maynilad Water Services which, like ABS-CBN, is owned by the Lopez family. It was suggested that the reported sacking of Dolphy's show was part of the deal.

Administration critics said the two recent events were among the horse-trading between Malacañang and the Lopezes, a major one being the drafting of Sen. Noli de Castro, a former ABS-CBN newsreader, as Ms Macapagal's running mate.

EDWIN BACASMAS

WHEN KINGS MEET. Comedy king Dolphy shares the stage with presidential candidate and friend Fernando "Da King" Poe Jr. during a campaign rally in Cebu City.

Dolphy claimed Ms Macapagal also played dumb about the Palace's role in the failed disqualification case against Poe, and a movie journalist's retelling of a 36-year-old mauling complaint, also against the action star.

Rallying Cebuanos to Poe's side, the comedian said: "If you want change, give him a chance." And then he vowed, "If he does anything wrong (as president), I will join you in going after him."

Dolphy's Cebu appearance was only the third time he joined Poe on the stump since the official campaign period kicked off on Feb. 10.

With this province considered an administration bailiwick, the KNP descended on it with a cast of well-known entertainers to help court votes.

"Eat Bulaga" mainstay Ruby Rodriguez co-emceed the grand rally with Sen. Vicente "Tito" Sotto III, a former comedian and one of the originators of the noontime variety show that airs on ABS-CBN's rival network, GMA 7.

Sotto's daughter Ciara and younger brother Vic each rendered a song. The other celebrities were Anjo Yllana, Wendell Ramos and Randy Santiago.

Visayan superstar Pilita Corales, known as Asia's "Queen of Song," was the last to perform. Poe joined her in singing "Usahay (Sometimes)," for a conclusion that was more reminiscent of "An Evening with Pilita," the 1960s weekly musical special that was, ironically enough, a pioneer production of the Lopez network.

Marcos, Estrada in hall of infamy warning to voters

From page A1

year's report, Finland ranked as the least corrupt country in the world. Singapore, among Asian countries, ranked high in honesty, with its transparency index higher than those of many industrial democracies.

In at least two previous reports, the Philippines was bracketed within the most corrupt group, which included many countries in Africa.

Suharto allegedly stole $15 billion to $35 billion; Marcos, $5 billion to $10 billion; and Estrada, $78 million to $80 million, according to the report.

Transparency International bases its report on surveys, indices and research, not merely on accounts of what Estrada calls the "wild press" in the Philippines.

Estrada, who is on trial on charges of plunder and corruption, justified his wealth acquisition, saying "I did not take any money from the government coffers." He said the money came from the private sector, referring to the allegation that he took bribes from illegal gambling and made money through stock market manipulation. Estrada's justification misses the point completely.

The report calls attention to the debilitating economic and social costs of corruption in developing societies. "Political corruption undermines the hopes for prosperity and stability of developing countries and damages the global economy," TI chair Peter Eigen said.

Abuse of political power

The abuse of political power for private gain deprives the most needy of vital public services, creating a level of despair that breeds conflict and violence. It also hits the pockets of taxpayers and shareholders worldwide. The problem must be tackled at the national and international level.

The key theme of the report is "abuse of political power for private gain." Whether Estrada stole from the public treasury or took bribes from operators of *jueteng*, an illegal numbers game, wealth was extracted through manipulation of political power. And this extraction represented leakage and transfer of wealth that could have gone into national development projects rather than into the pockets of officials.

The report echoes literature on political corruption, based on studies of the World Bank which has emphasized the theme that corruption is anti-poor. These studies demonstrate that political corruption is not only an ethical issue but more so, exacts political costs that undermine the legitimacy of corrupt governments and deprive them of resources to fund public projects.

Swiss banks

It cannot be said that the TI report is based on flimsy press reports. The plunder case against Estrada in the Philippine anti-graft court and the effort by the government to recover Marcos' unexplained wealth have built up a considerable body of evidence to warrant conclusions made by the report on the 10 most corrupt leaders.

Of the 10 leaders listed by the TI, none has ever been convicted of massive corruption by national judicial authorities. Most have fled their countries and have been reported to have hidden their stolen wealth in the anonymity of Swiss banks.

The report was published at the height of the election campaign, in which corruption is developing as a central issue. Although the timing of its release is merely coincidental with the election, its effect is to refocus the campaign debate on corruption, more so because nearly all presidential candidates have avoided confronting economic issues.

The report cuts across rival election camps. At the time of its release, President Macapagal-Arroyo has come under fire for the government's decision to take over the debt-saddled Maynilad Water Services through an agreement with the Lopezes, the majority owner of the water utility firm.

The issue over this settlement is whether the government gave the Lopezes debt relief in exchange of their political support. Ms Macapagal's rivals have used the deal to burnish the corruption allegations that had been thrown at the President even before the election campaign started. These allegations, arising from the so-called "Jose Pidal" bank accounts, have not been seriously taken to the official investigating bodies and the courts. Pidal is allegedly First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo.

Poe's defense of Estrada

The TI report has a fallout on the opposition camp. It puts opposition presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. on the defensive although he has not been attacked for corruption, given that his integrity remains untested because he has never held public office.

The report prompted Poe to defend Estrada, for the wrong reason. He said Estrada's trial for plunder "is not over yet."

The return of Estrada's corruption to the center of election debate hurts Poe's campaign. Poe is closely associated with Estrada, and Estrada's record in the presidency, marred by corruption, incompetence and mismanagement, rubs off on Poe.

Poe has portrayed himself as an Estrada look-alike in his effort to capture the deposed President's constituency—the urban poor. He has hijacked Estrada's pro-poor slogans and has molded his populist style as a caricature of Estrada.

This imitation has become a political liability and has not caught fire. Estrada's record—especially on corruption—is an albatross hanging heavily around Poe's neck. Estrada is a deadweight to Poe. Estrada's stigma transfers to Poe.

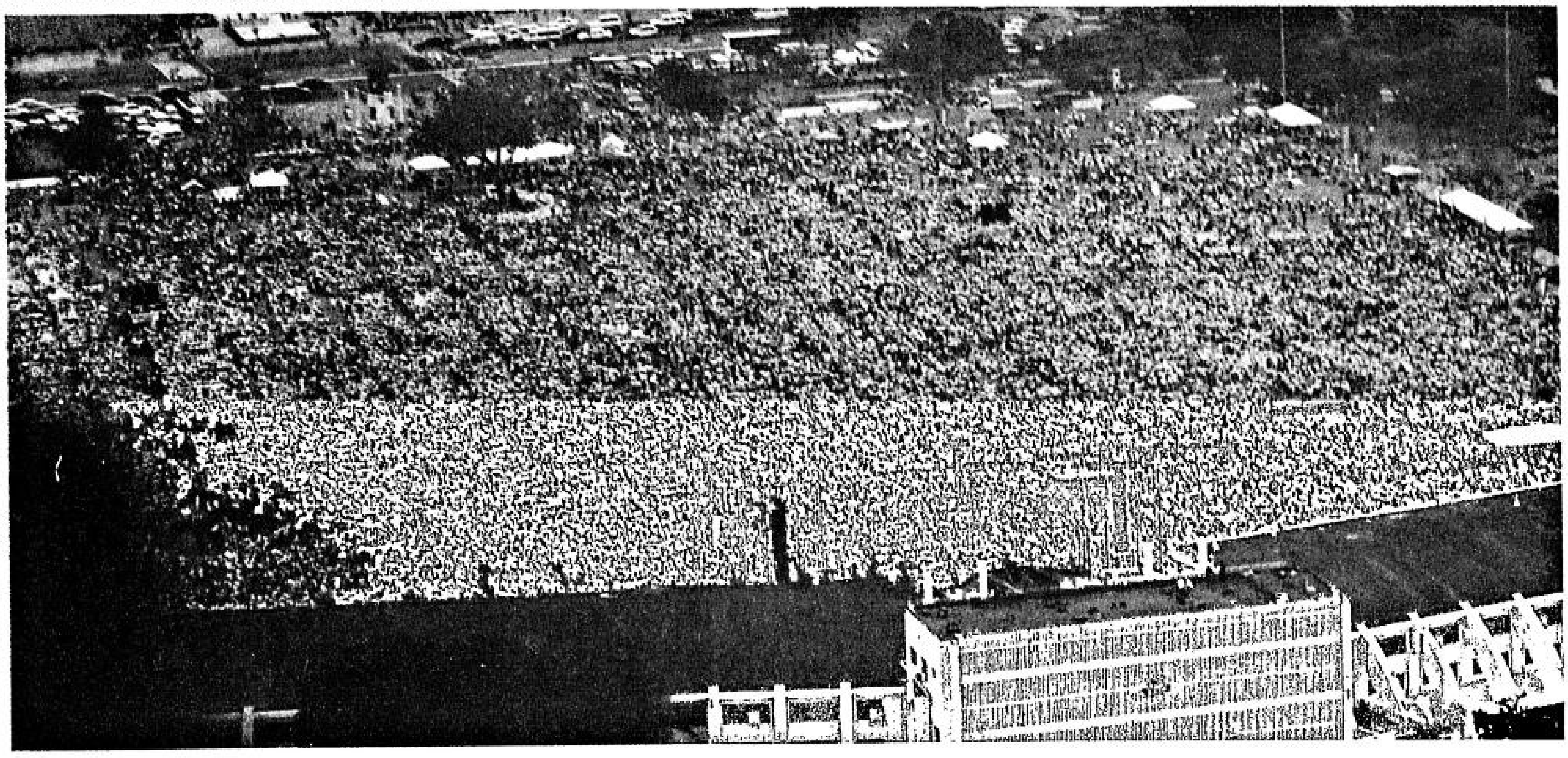
The image that Poe conjures in the foreign press is he is inadequately prepared for the presidency because of his lack of political experience or his meager educational preparation that cannot be supplied by "crash courses" on the economy given by "think tanks" that offer quick fixes.

Crony interests

A reading of the assessment of the foreign press of the Philippine election campaign reveals concern over a sharp economic downturn if Poe were elected president. In some press reports, the Philippines has been described as a "failing state" that requires badly a leadership change for the better to avoid a collapse.

These concerns reflect the uncertainties expressed by the Philippine business community and foreign investment centers over a presidential campaign that refuses to face, let alone, debate economic issues.

A recent perception that has left a strong mark in the foreign press reports is that the opposition coalition sponsoring Poe is built on an alliance of crony interests associated with the discredited Marcos and Estrada regimes.



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"The whole nation must arise from the morass of corruption that has been pulling it down for decades. Its call is for nothing less than national moral transformation."

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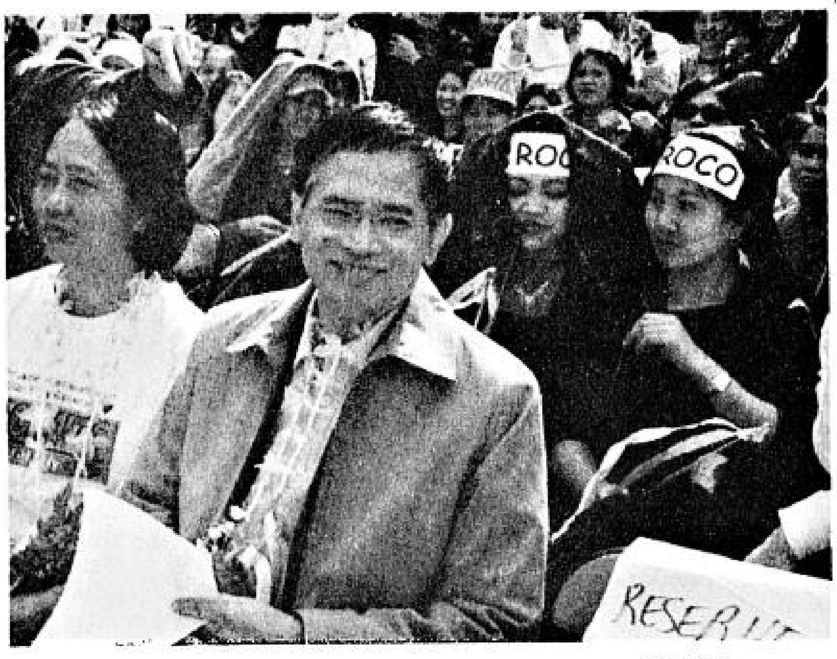

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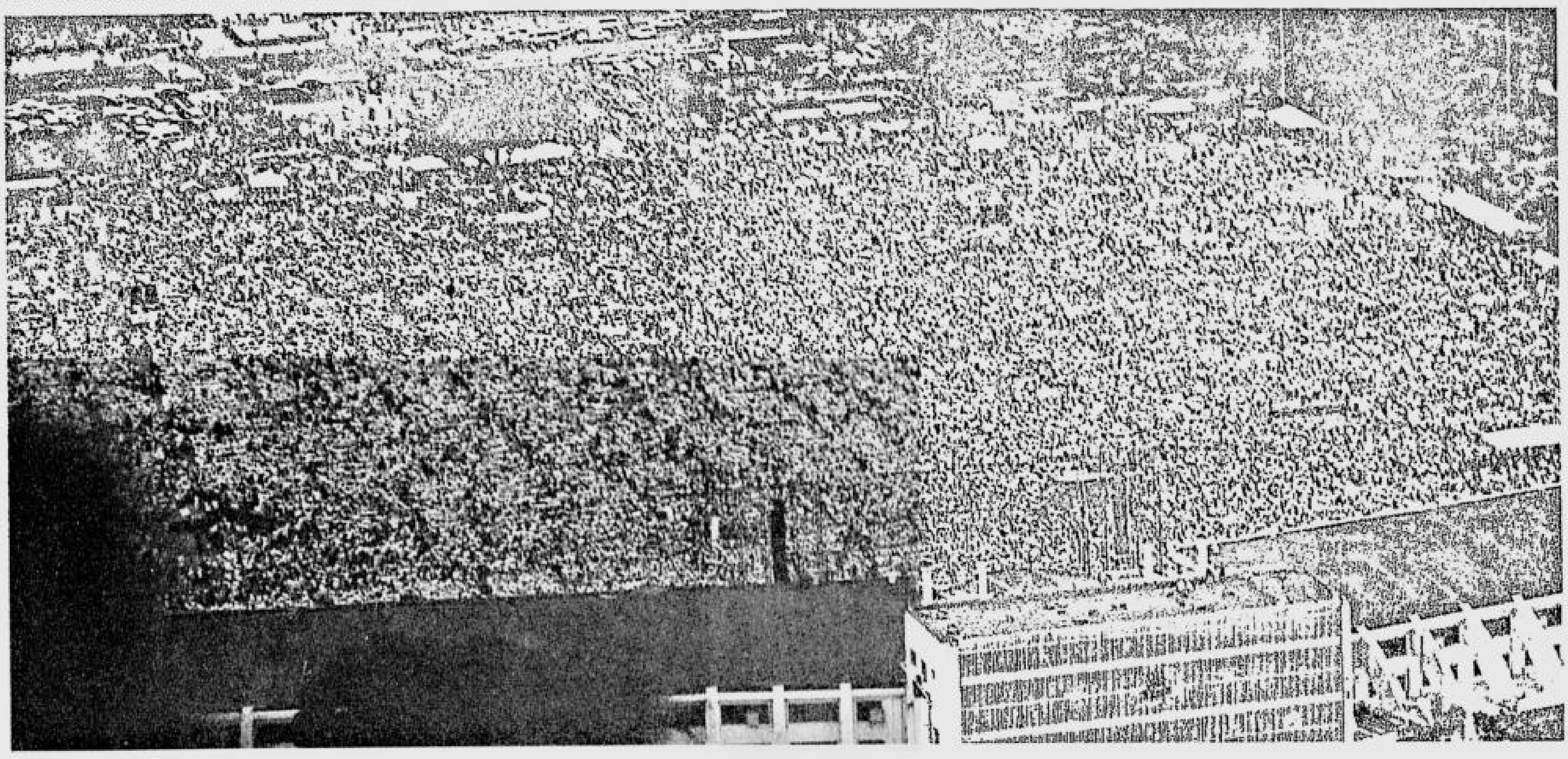

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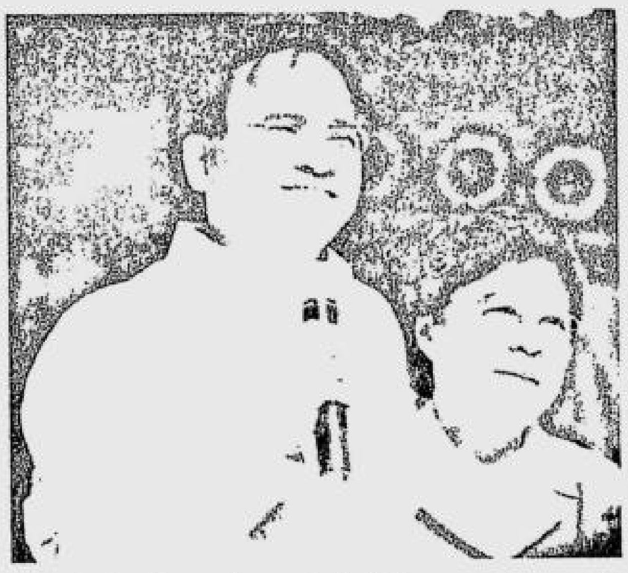

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NPA 'graduates' keep red flag flying

From page A1

(NPA) has tried to show its strength.

More than 100 rebels raided the patrol base of the Army's 4th Infantry Division in Barangay Tapale, Paquibato District in Davao City at around 5:45 a.m. yesterday.

Outnumbered soldiers of the 72nd Infantry Battalion foiled the attack, forcing the guerrillas to retreat after four hours of a fierce gun battle, military information officer Lt. Col. Daniel Lucero said.

Lucero said two members of the Civilian Active Auxiliary were wounded while the NPA was believed to have suffered an undetermined number of casualties, based on blood trails as they withdrew.

On Friday, another NPA unit raided the Philippine National Oil Co.'s geothermal plant in Ormoc City in Leyte, and killed five people—two policemen and three PNOC employees—in a subsequent ambush.

As they prepared to celebrate their anniversary today, the guerrillas threatened more attacks and warned US forces anew that they faced assaults if they got directly involved in counterinsurgency operations, The Associated Press reported.

"We must warn the US to cease and desist from fielding US military forces and violating the national sovereignty of the Filipino people," the Communist Party of the Philippines said in a statement, referring to American soldiers now in the country to train Filipino soldiers.

Proud father

Ka (Comrade) Oris, in charge of about 70 NPA recruits finishing a six-week course in guerrilla warfare, swells like a proud father as graduation day nears.

"Time is on our side," he says, dismissing the failure of communism elsewhere as part of the "ups and downs" of revolutionary movements.

"We have not been crushed by the biggest imperial power in history," he adds, referring to the United States.

The sprightly 55-year-old, who seems to model his well-trimmed beard after that of the late Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh, has spent more than a decade on the run.

He is one of the NPA's top cadres, planning strategy from a tiny jungle shelter in Surigao del Sur amid a tangle of wires connecting his telephones. While his comrades in the legal Communist Party of the Philippines and National Democratic Front talk peace with the government from exile in the Netherlands, Oris' focus is firmly on the armed struggle.

As elections approach, barely a day goes by without NPA rebels attacking police, clashing with soldiers or assaulting local politicians who balk at their "permit to campaign" fees.

Unlike Moro rebel groups fighting for an Islamic state in Mindanao, the NPA is active on the entire archipelago. To Washington, they are terrorists, while Manila says they are extortionists who cripple rural development and drive away investment and tourists.

Either way, NPA rebels have proved remarkably resilient over the past 35 years while communist movements elsewhere in Asia were either crushed long ago or had lost their radical edge in government.

"The Filipino comrades are very clumsy," late Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping once said, as Beijing established relations with fervent anti-communist President Ferdinand Marcos in the 1970s.

Internal feud

Watching the new NPA recruits clump through the mud in ill-fitting rubber boots, it is clear they still lack polish.

But as China recently changed its constitution to protect private property, Filipino communists are still holding out for a revolution and growing more confident by the day.

After suffering from a bloody internal feud in the wake of Marcos' fall from power in 1986, the NPA's ranks have grown by several thousands to an estimated 11,000 in the past decade.

Any trip into the countryside shows why.

For many rural poor, life has changed little since Spanish colonialists grabbed vast tracts of land centuries ago.

Millions of farmers still scrape a living from small patches of rented land, while the wealthy descendants of Spanish families use vast haciendas for weekends away from the city.

Nicole's cause

Despite "people power" uprisings in 1986 and 2001—ousting Presidents Marcos and Joseph Estrada—the Philippines has seen little genuine economic or political reform, which is fueling widespread sympathy for the NPA among the poor.

Ka Nicole, sweating after a session practising hand-to-hand combat, rests her rifle against a tree stump and says she hated the military even before her father was killed in 2002 when his NPA unit clashed with soldiers.

"My father told me to ask farmers why they don't have enough to eat," said Nicole, pretty and barely out of her teens. "They told me that they have to sell their produce almost for free. Even if they own land, it's only one or two hectares."

Nicole's commitment has little to do with Marx. Like other graduates, most of whom are young and from local tribes, it seems enough that the NPA gives them rice, cigarettes and a sense of justice and purpose that the crumbling rural economy cannot.

But the revolution is not as pure as it could be. *Reuters with reports from Christian V. Esguerra and AP*

Malaysian peace team visits . . .

From page A1

ty-Catholic nation's sovereignty.

Brig. Gen. Zulkifli bin Zain, head of the Malaysian peace monitors, was greeted by shouts of "Allahu Akbar!" (God is great) by MILF rebels raising their fists and rifles in the air.

The Malaysian Army general walked past hundreds of MILF fighters carrying rockets, grenades and an assortment of assault rifles under the shade of coconut trees.

"It's only through cooperation and mutual trust that we can achieve peace and stability," Zulkifli said.

The base, in Sultan Kudarat municipality, is home to thousands of Moro rebels and civilians and is the acknowledged headquarters of the MILF's leadership.

Murad appears

Just after the Malaysians left, MILF chair Ibrahim Murad arrived there in a rare public appearance, sending rebel soldiers scurrying into defensive positions.

"It is a development in the peace process and we hope the progress will continue," he told Reuters.

Murad was elevated to chair of the 12,500-strong MILF after the death last July of Salamat Hashim, an Islamic preacher seen as more conservative.

Another member of the Malaysian team said he and his colleagues were satisfied with what they had seen so far.

"We've seen tremendous support on both sides to make this trip a success and we hope the support on the peace process will continue," the official said.

A member of the small military team that accompanied the Malaysians said both sides are "behaving well" since a ceasefire was reimposed on July 19 last year after renewed fighting left hundreds dead and tens of thousands homeless.

A total of 499 major and minor engagements had been recorded from January 2003 until the ceasefire in July, but only 44 incidents had happened after the truce until December last year, said Maj. Dickson Hermoso, a member of the government's ceasefire committee.

"We are seeing much reduced fighting since January this year," he said, adding the deployment of an international monitoring team would create a more peaceful and stable climate to forge a peace agreement. *Reuters*

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EVER INVENTED
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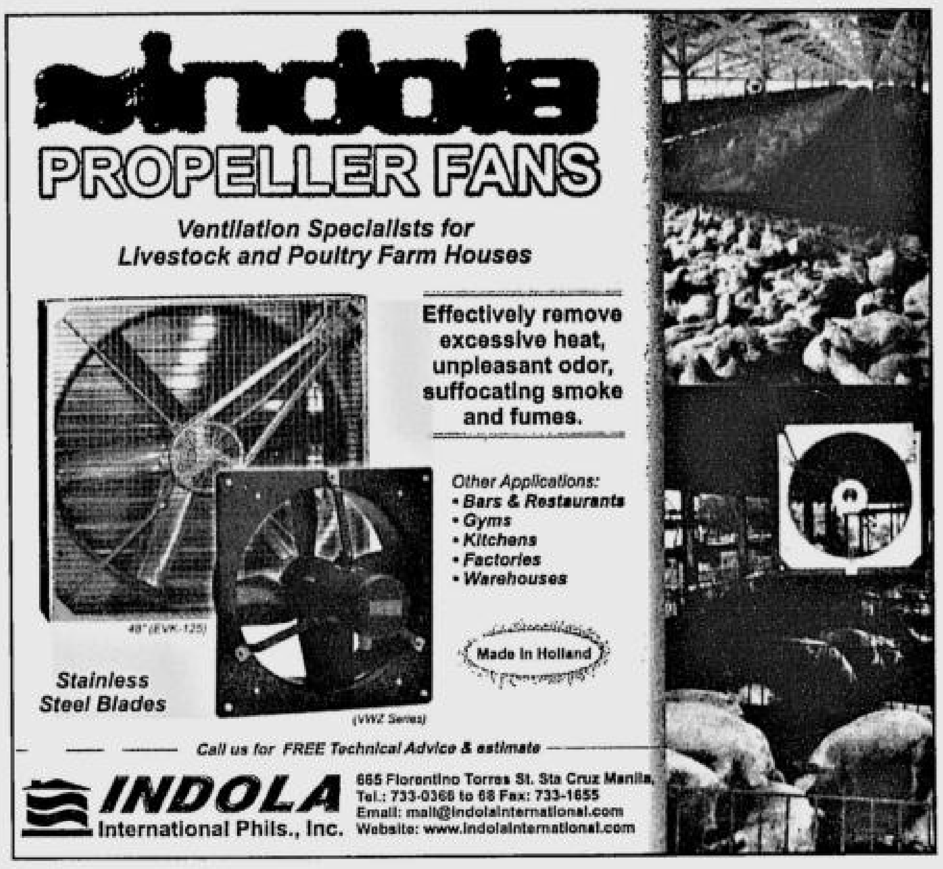

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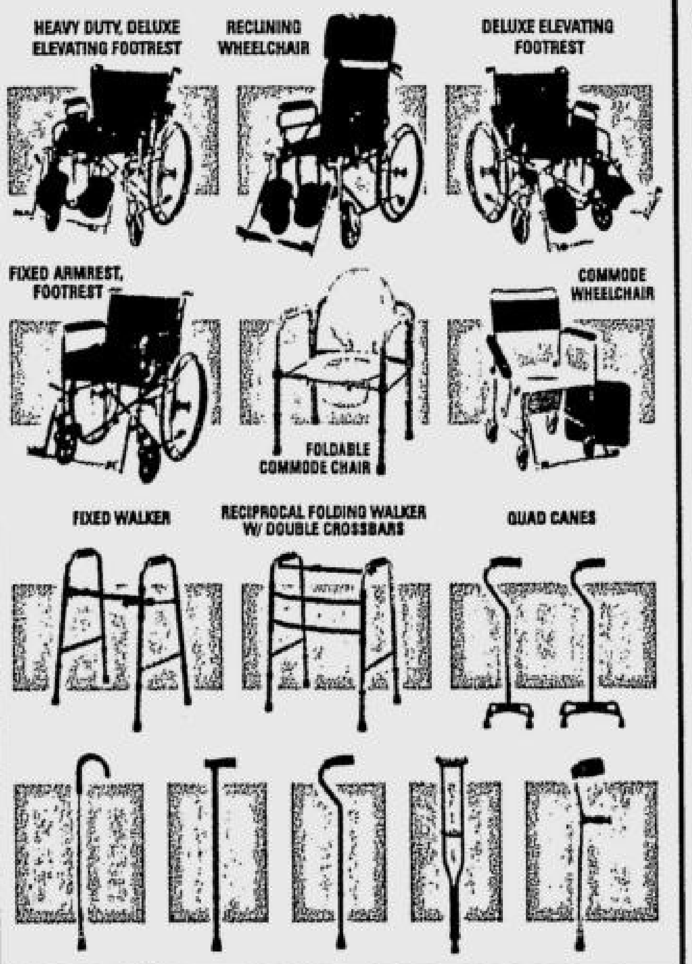
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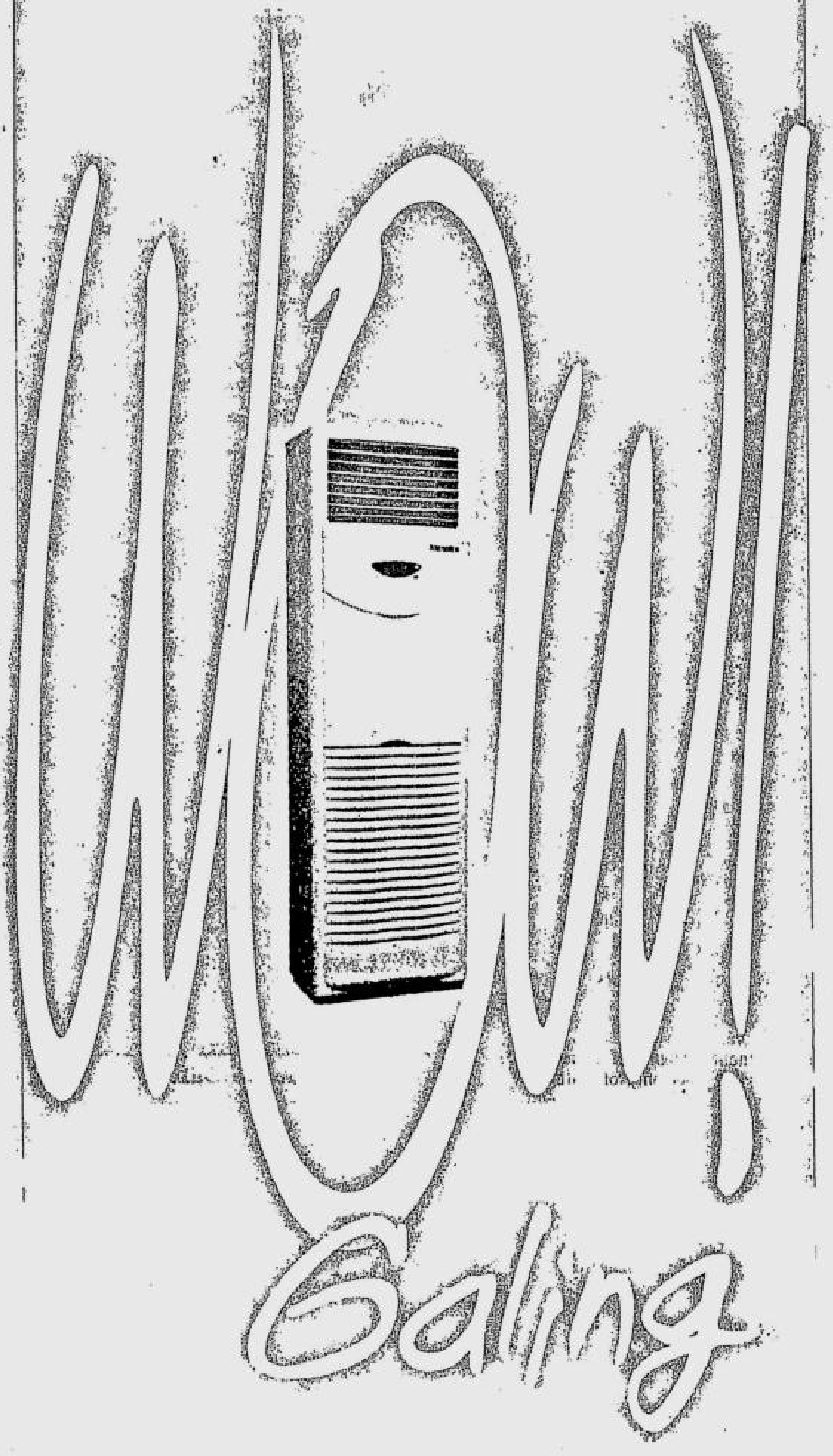

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Robbers strike in crowded mall

One of the suspects nabbed after heist

By Tarra Quismundo

TWO ARMED men pulled off a daring noontime robbery yesterday inside the crowded Tutuban Mall in Tondo, Manila.

The suspects, one armed with a knife and the other with a 22-caliber pistol, passed through the north entrance of the Cluster Building shortly before 12 noon and told two guards there to lie face down on the floor.

They then proceeded to the Gold View General Merchandise at stall C-23, shattered the glass display case there, and took expensive gold jewelry, witnesses told police.

The suspect with a gun then fired two shots into the air, sending shoppers and employees from nearby shops and stalls scampering for safety.

"The people panicked and scampered out of the building," said Danilo Dayugan, a storekeeper of stall C-15, which was behind Gold View. The robbers then fled.

One of the suspects, identified as Salahudin Jamal, was later arrested by policemen from Station 11 of the Western Police District.

His arrest came after storekeepers and other passersby called for police help through Patrol 117, the police emergency hotline.

The call was received by the Dagupan community precinct of the WPD Station 2 (Tondo), which looks after the Tutuban Mall.

They then relayed the information to other police units. Policemen from Station 11 who were informed of the call then spotted Jamal as he crossed over to their area along C. M, Recto Avenue, in front of the three-story Cluster Building.

Jamal, 23, of Maharlika Village, Taguig, was taken into custody after a brief chase. An undetermined amount of jewelry was recovered from him. Police also seized a handgun from Jamal, which had spent four shells.

He was turned over to the Tondo Station for investigation.

As of press time, investigators at the Tondo station have yet to determine the amount of jewelry that the suspects took.

The police also have yet to determine whether the robber who escaped was able to stash away jewelry, apart from the gold jewelry recovered from Jamal.

ADB project for Payatas poor

THE ASIAN Development Bank has turned over its slum upgrading project in Payatas, Quezon City, to 500 urban poor families, 100 of whom were directly affected by a garbage landslide tragedy in 2000.

The $1-million project is funded by the Japanese government through the ADB's Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction program.

Under the pilot project, loans were made available for better livelihoods and homes, road and drainage construction, and a water supply system.

Thomas Crouch, ADB Country Director for the Philippines, praised the community as a model of urban development.

"The importance of what you have done goes well beyond the improvements in your own quality of life," Crouch said.

"Most directly, your children will grow up healthier, better educated, in a cleaner environment, and with greater later-life opportunities," he added.

The pilot project in Payatas will help in the design of two proposed ADB loans—a $50 million Metro Manila Urban Services for the Poor Project and a 15-year urban upgrading strategy for Metro Manila.

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Maari bang ipagtanggol ang Maynilad deal?

Noong Biyernes, hinimay natin ang isyu ng Maynilad compromise agreement. Nadale ba ang taong bayan? Ang sagot ng Maynilad management: Hindi. Sila ang nadale! Ngayong alas-10 ng gabi (at alas-8 bukas ng umaga, sa replay), isang masinsinang talakayan kasama ang dating presidente ng Maynilad Water, Rafael Alunan. Exclusive sa InqTV on ABC.

ABC

Dr. Mariano; 62

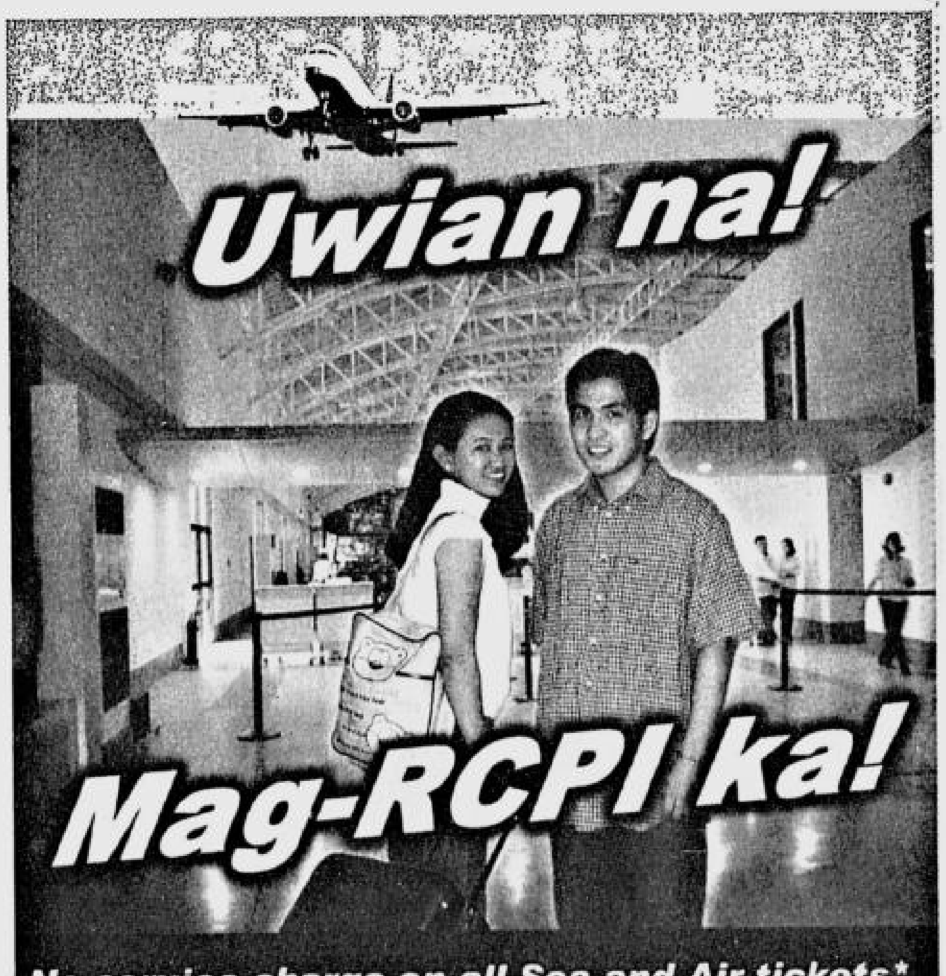
DR. MANUEL "Manny" Javier Mariano died of heart failure in Grand Forks, North Dakota, on March 19. He was 62.

He is survived by his wife, Lily, children Jerry and Jenni, Joy and Jeff, and grandchildren Nathan and Lydia.

His remains arrived last night from the US and will lie in state at The Messiah Community Church (TMCC) on Venus Street, San Isidro, Taytay, Rizal.

Interment will be on March 31 at the Holy Garden Memorial Park in Taytay, Rizal, at 1 p.m.

Dr. Mariano had regularly conducted medical eye missions here, providing free treatment to patients with cataract, glaucoma and other eye diseases in Bicol, Batangas, Marinduque, Zambales, Banawe and Rizal.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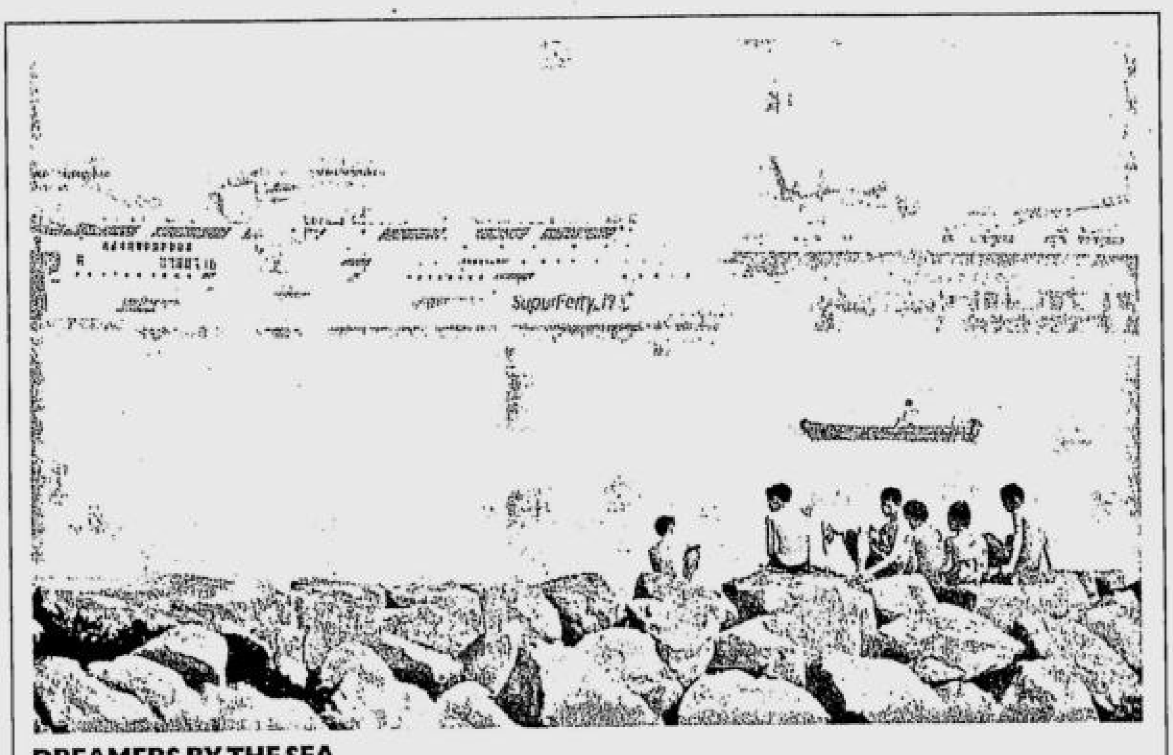

DREAMERS BY THE SEA

Luxury ships and cruise liners anchored in Manila Bay provide a dream of adventure and fun for these young boys, specially during summertime. ERIK ARAZAS

Malonzo tells candidates: Get permits first

By Edson Castro Tandoc Jr.

CALOOCAN City Mayor Rey Malonzo yesterday asked other local candidates in the city to first get a permit from the city hall before organizing rallies or motorcades to avoid jamming traffic.

He also told the INQUIRER that they were preparing disqualification cases against other local candidates who went on motorcades without getting permits.

Malonzo's directive drew an immediate reaction from mayoralty candidate and lawyer Rep. Enrico Echiverri, who said that Malonzo was "implementing his own rules (because) no permit is needed."

Another mayoralty candidate, Edgar Erice, also said motorcades were not illegal because the campaign period has started. "We don't need to get permits as long as we are not violating any ordinance."

Echiverri, Erice, Macario Assistio Jr. and Malonzo's wife, Gigi, are all running for mayor.

During the first campaign day on Thursday, streets were clogged when Erice and Echiverri held simultaneous rallies in the morning, while Malonzo's camp closed the stretch of A. Mabini Road to inaugurate government projects in the afternoon.

MALONZO

Yesterday, it was Assistio's turn to hold his motorcade around the city.

Malonzo said that aside from causing traffic jams, motorcades and rallies without permits have also caused tension among supporters because candidates often hold activities simultaneously.

But Echiverri said the activities of Malonzo's camp also caused traffic jams. He asked Malonzo to "level the playing field."

"If they can have their motorcades, they should also allow the motorcades of other candidates," he said.

Malonzo said they would give permits even to their rivals as long as the activities would not disrupt traffic.

Asked about fears that the elections in the city would be violent, Assistio Jr. said in an earlier interview "*malamang* (likely)."

He said violence would begin from political camps which have "private armies."

Carless day, anyone?

IT'S NOT compulsory like the Metro Manila Development Authority's color-coding scheme, but it's an immense favor for everyone's lungs.

Environment officials and green activists hope to squeeze out some volunteer spirit from the motoring public as they start campaigning for the observance of "carless" Fridays.

The drive is an appeal to vehicle owners to use public transport on the last workday of the week.

It was launched last Friday in Quezon City by way of a jogging and biking parade. Similar activities will be held in the next four Fridays—April 2, 16, 23 and 30.

METROBRIEFS

Gunshot settlement

A GANG of seven men settled an argument through gunshots in Tondo, Manila, the other day. The men, known only through their aliases, Bong, Kuwatog, Rick, June, Boyet, Greg and Buboy, allegedly shot Lope Lorenzo, 32, from Area B, Parola Compound in Tondo. In a report, SPO4 Alfredo Salazar of the Western Police District Homicide Division said that Lorenzo was hanging out at a store near his house, when the seven men came wielding handguns around 7:30 p.m. on Saturday. The victim and the suspects had allegedly quarreled about illegal electrical connection. The suspects fired, hitting Lorenzo in his left side. He was already dead when brought to Gat Andres Bonifacio Medical Center. The suspects are all at large. *Tarra Quismundo*

Distracting calls

MORE than 80 percent of the calls for police assistance are domestic squabbles, and they distract the police from performing more important tasks, the Marikina Police chief said. "Based on statistics, more than 80 percent of the calls that we received involve family members or neighbors fighting over something," Sr. Supt. Felipe Rojas Jr. said. "We hope that barangay officials could resolve these cases so we could focus our energy on other crimes, such as robberies," he added. Rojas said in many instances, the aggrieved party eventually drops the case—something which could be done in barangay halls. Some of the cases involve drunk neighbors making too much noise, couples smashing items inside the home, and family members in fights. Luige del Puerto

Holy Week experience

FOR THE third year in a row, the Bukal ng Tipan (CICM Maryhill Compound, Taytay, Rizal) is offering a unique holy week experience on the hill, such as a Last Supper in the garden on Holy Thursday, and carrying a cross to the top of the hill during Good Friday. The Bukal ng Tipan Team, led by Fr. Mark Lesage, CICM will lead the reflections and liturgical celebrations. For inquiries, please call 658-5064 or 825-3892.

GMA woos squatters with housing fund

By Gil Cabacungan

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday wooed thousands of slum dwellers at the Payatas community in Quezon City with a P500 million seed money for financing their housing needs.

In a Pulong Bayan session at the Payatas High School, Ms Macapagal announced that the government has allocated P500 million for the establishment of a Social Housing Finance Corp., which would allow the urban poor to acquire the land they were living on from their private owners.

The President expected the new entity to generate P30 million annually from interest income on its seed money, which it would use for a community mortgage program wherein residents in a squatters area would pay collectively for the site of their illegal dwellings.

This setup should allow the corporation to sustain its lending operations without being hobbled by the government's limited credit facilities.

She said the government has shifted its focus to squatters on private lands after previous efforts have been focused on addressing the needs of squatters on government lands. She estimated that 700,000 urban poor families nationwide have benefited from this program.

The President said the government's urban poor housing program has been a hit because squatters were able to acquire land that were worth P5,000 at only P700 per square meter.

The President giving squatters an opportunity to own their land should pave the way for residents to get more opportunities to improve their economic status by having a permanent address.

4 village guards face charges

FOUR guards of a posh village in Parañaque City are now facing charges of frustrated homicide for allegedly shooting a gardener the other night.

Police identified the guards as Roldan Cabeson, 26; Charles Rabanes, 24; Rowelyn Castillo, 31; and Allan Rom, 31.

The victim, Gilboy Guatcho, 28, sustained two gunshot wounds.

Police said the shooting occurred when the guards clashed with a group from the squatter's area led by Guatcho around 8 p.m. Saturday. *Margaux Ortiz*

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REACTION TO ALMA

Plan for Baclaran illegal, says MMDA

By Margaux Ortiz

THE METROPOLITAN Manila Development Authority (MMDA) yesterday criticized Parañaque City mayoralty candidate Alma Moreno for making campaign promises that tend to support moves that could violate the law.

"*Hindi puwede 'yun* (That can not be allowed)," MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando said, referring to Moreno's plan of giving back the streets and sidewalks of Baclaran to illegal vendors should she win in May.

Not all of Baclaran

He added, "*Baka hindi alam nung kandidato ang sinasabi n'ya* (Maybe the candidate did not know what she was talking about)."

This developed as Dr. Rodolfo Punzalan, spokesperson of the actress-turned-politician, clarified that Moreno would not give back all of Baclaran's roads and sidewalks to illegal vendors, but only some of it.

While admitting that Moreno declared that she would be granting concessions to vendors, Punzalan stressed that what Moreno meant was to "provide the vendors with rightful places but not in the areas which would impede traffic flow."

Two streets

He said they would only provide two side streets for the vendors' exclusive use.

According to Punzalan, Moreno was not able to expound on this during the rally because of limited time.

Nonetheless, MMDA Traffic Operations Center Director Angelito Vergel de Dios said such a move would still be illegal.

"The streets are beyond the commerce of man," Vergel de Dios said in a phone interview.

He also criticized Moreno for making populist statements just to get votes.

No justification

"Getting votes is not enough justification to support acts that are against the law," Vergel de Dios stressed.

He added that most illegal vendors in Baclaran were not even from Parañaque.

Meanwhile, Punzalan explained that Moreno's statement on throwing stones at people seeking to evict the vendors was a "figure of speech."

"It means that she would defend their rights as human beings," he clarified.

Moreno issued the statements during her proclamation rally Thursday.

SUMMER COLORS
A vendor arranges colorful floaters, which he sells for P80 to P200 each on a roadside in Laguna. Temperatures have risen to usher in the summer, which is inviting people to the many beautiful beaches in the country. AP

Color coding exemptions to be recalled

DUE TO the proliferation of fake exemption certificates for the Unified Vehicular Volume Reduction Program or UVVRP, the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) will recall certificates for April to June and replace these with new ones.

MMDA Traffic Operations Center Director Angelito Vergel de Dios said the new certificates would have significant changes to distinguish them from counterfeits and illegally acquired papers.

He disclosed that some unscrupulous MMDA personnel were selling UVVRP exemption certificates for as much as P3,500.

Only P100

Vergel de Dios pointed out that exemption papers could be availed of at the MMDA for only P100.

"We only ask motorists to pay us P100 as processing fee. Anything in excess of that go to the swindlers' pockets," Vergel de Dios explained.

The traffic chief appealed to businessmen, traders delivering perishable goods, physicians and sick people who need to be transported everyday to legally apply for an exemption certificate.

MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando warned that motorists buying fake certificates could go to jail.

"It means that you are an accomplice to a crime," Fernando said. *Margaux Ortiz*

Local bets dirty Cainta

By Cenon Bibe Jr.
Metro Desk Editor

ELECTION rules on the proper placement of campaign posters have gone up the wall in Cainta, Rizal.

Since the start of the campaign period for local candidates, walls, lamp posts, trees and even overhead telephone and electricity cables have been littered with illegally posted campaign materials.

Ugly road

Felix Avenue (formerly Imelda), which links Cainta with Marikina and Quezon City, has been turned into an ugly stretch of road with posters of candidates lining up both sides of the thoroughfare.

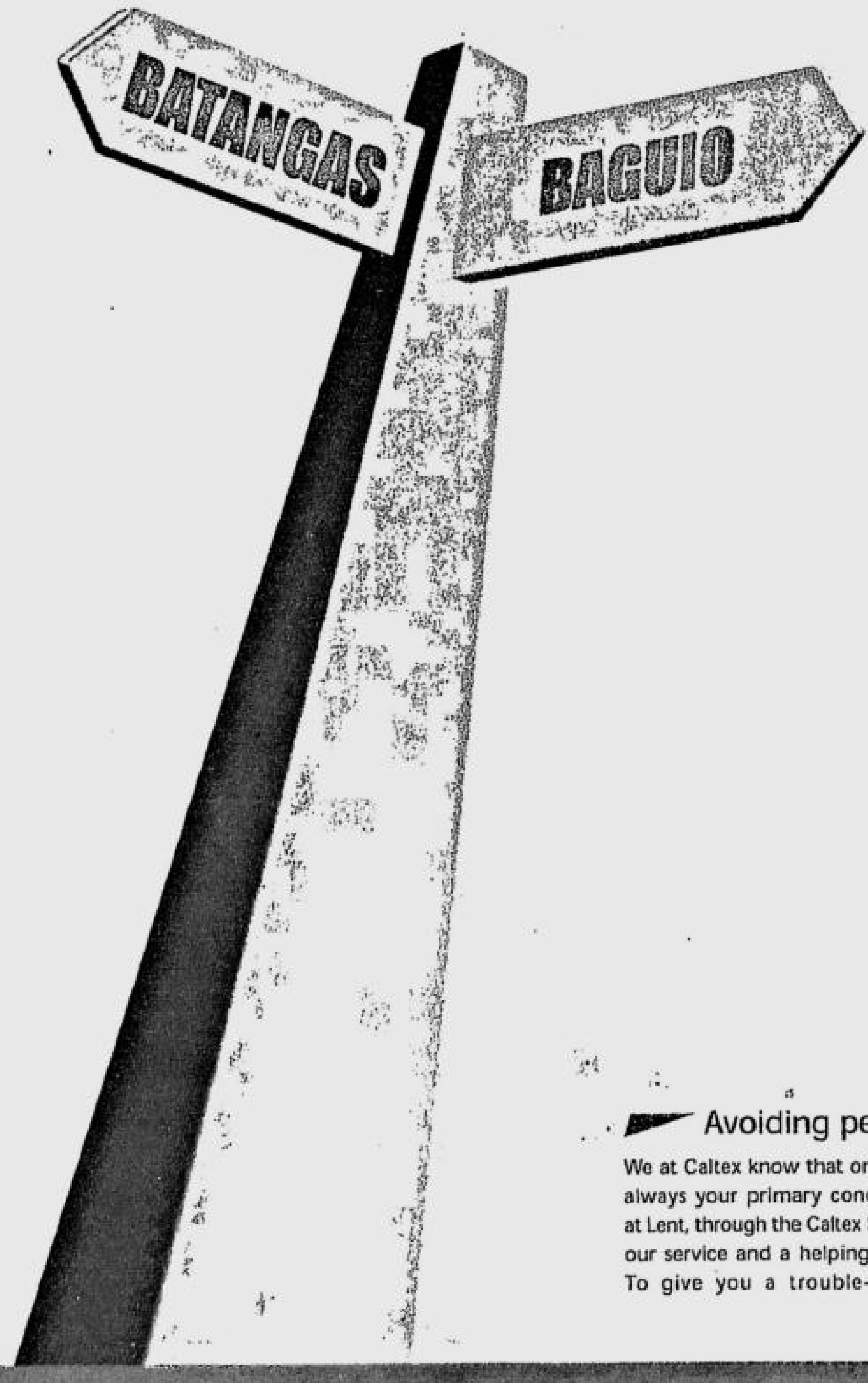
On the posters violating election regulations on campaign materials are the names and faces of political wannabes that include Yto Ynares, Nick Felix, Mon Ilagan, Jules Narag, Jestoni Alarcon, Sanchez, Rodriguez and a host of other candidates jockeying for positions that range from councilor to governor.

Sanctions

Also visible are illegally posted materials of national candidates Panfilo Lacson, Heherson Alvarez and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

According to the rules and regulations of the Commission on Elections, campaign materials and posters can only be placed in common poster areas or on private property with the explicit permission of the owner.

Candidates found violating the law on posters face disqualification.



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BASKETBALL: NBA Greatest Games - Bullets vs Sonics, Game 7, 1978 Finals; 8 a.m.; Solar Sports - Washington captures its first major sports title courtesy of its Bullets, who overcome Seattle.

NBA - Jazz vs Lakers; 10:30 a.m. (r-10 p.m.); Solar Sports; Mavs vs Magic; 8 p.m.; IBC 13 - Utah faces Los Angeles while Dallas tries to make Orlando disappear.

Vintage NBA - Dennis Johnson; 1 p.m.; Solar Sports - Take a look back at the career of this former Seattle and Boston great.

US NCAA Tournament; 6 p.m.; Solar Sports - Catch more Sweet 16 action in the US collegiate loop.

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Parica rolls back Souquet, reaches finals

FILIPINO pool master Jose "Amang" Parica nosed out former world champion Ralf "Kaiser" Souquet of Germany, 10-9, yesterday to reach the finals of the Brunswick Men's Professional Players Championship at the Valley Forge Convention Center in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania.

Souquet opened up a 7-3 lead before Parica rallied to within one at 9-8.

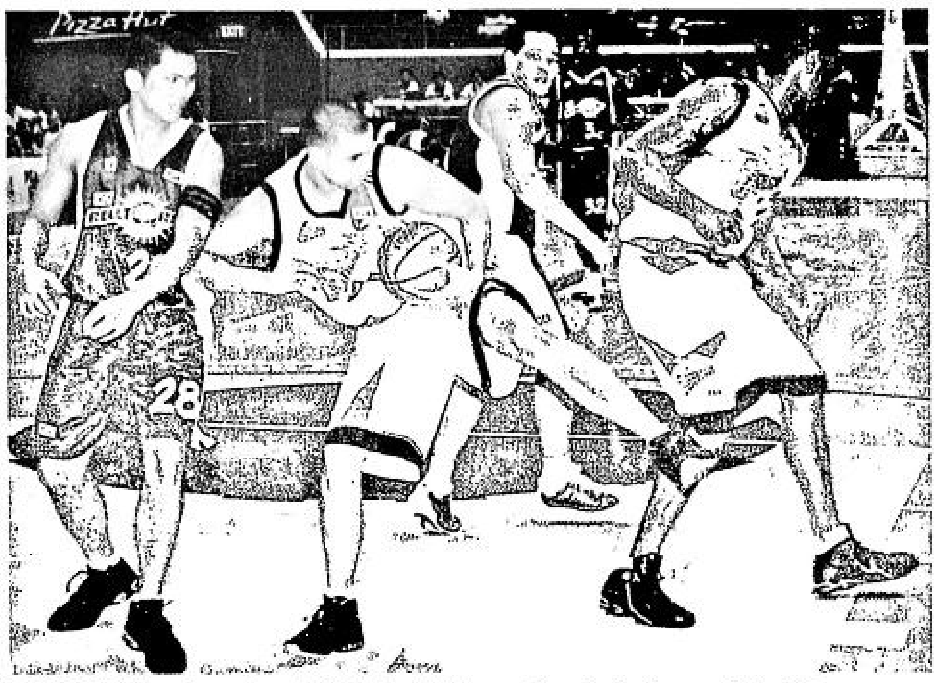
Going for the win on the 18th frame, Souquet had a scratch and the La Puente, California-based Parica wasted no time taking the last two racks to clinch the victory.

The 54-year-old Parica, the kingpin in the billiard circuit in the mid '80s, will dispute the crown with either Souquet or Johnny Archer in this 2004 US Super Billiards Expo 9-Ball Tour event.

Souquet had earlier downed Santos Sambajon of Quezon province in the third match.

With a report from Marlon Bernardino

PARICA



DANNY Seigle grabs a rebound off Sta.Lucia's Norman Gonzales in the game last night. RUDY ESPERAS

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SMB lives with Long in foul trouble

By June Navarro

ART Long can ride the bench at crunchtime and the San Miguel Beermen can still escape with a win.

With the brawny Long in foul-trouble, the Beermen turned to Danny Seigle and Danny Ildefonso in the fourth quarter and rolled back the Sta. Lucia Realtors, 94-84, last night in the Gran Matador PBA Fiesta Conference at the Araneta Coliseum.

Seigle scored nine of his 13 points while Ildefonso added five in a vicious SMB charge in the last period that wiped out a 68-61 SLR lead and sent the frontrunning Beermen on the way to their seventh consecutive victory.

Long, frustrated over several non-calls by referees, was pulled out of the game after getting his fifth foul near the end of the third and was benched for most of the final period at a time the Beermen needed him most.

"We never gave up even without Art as our shots started connecting," said San Miguel Beer coach Jong Uichico, who later rued the easygoing attitude of his wards against the Realtors.

"The team is already taking things for granted. My players think things are now easy because of what we've accomplished so far. They think we've done something already and that frustrated Art," Uichico added.

Taking advantage of the complacent Beermen in the third period, Derrick Brown unloaded 19 of his game-high 37 points to boost the Realtors in front before Seigle and Ildefonso responded for the Beermen.

However, Brown was accidentally hit by a driving Nic Belasco in the stomach, leaving the high-scoring Sta. Lucia import sprawled on the floor writhing in pain.

Brown was taken out of the game with still five minutes to play and that eventually doomed the Realtors to their sixth defeat in seven games.

Long finished with 23 points and 20 rebounds, Olsen Racela had 15 points, including three triples, while Dorian Peña matched Seigle's 13 points.

Newly installed Shell coach Leo Austria steered the Turbochargers to a 102-98 win over the Barangay Ginebra Kings in the second game. The Turbochargers tied the Gin Kings at 3-5. Ginebra dropped its fourth straight game, three of them under coach Siot Tanquincen.

GAMES WEDNESDAY *(Araneta Coliseum)*
4:45 p.m.—FedEx vs Sta. Lucia
7:10 p.m.—San Miguel Beer vs Alaska

The scores:

First game:

SAN MIGUEL 94—Long 23, Racela 15, Seigle 13, Pena 13, Ildefonso 9, Singson 8, Belasco 7, Hontiveros 6

STA. LUCIA 84—Brown 37, Espino 12, Aquino 12, Cuan 9, Gonzales 8, Locsin 2, Ong 2, Francisco 2, Omolon 0, Santos 0, Adriano 0, Mendoza 0.

Quarters: 27-14, 37-35, 61-68, 94-84.

Second game:

SHELL 102—Tubid 19, Dela Cruz 19, Hrabak 16, Ondera 15, Ferreria 11, Alvarez 8, Jackson 6, Bajar 4, Calagulo 4, Mamaril 0.

GINEBRA 98—Braggs 26, Caguioa 26, Menk 23, Santos 9, Adducul 7, Seigle 4, David 2, Ballesteros 1, Salvacion 0, Helterbrand 0, Noble 0.

Quarters: 23-22, 55-42, 78-69, 102-98.

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195/65R15	2,236	205/65R15	2,640
205/65R15	2,361	195/60R14	2,113
185/60R14	1,852	185/70R14	1,967
195/60R15	2,239	185/65R15	2,063
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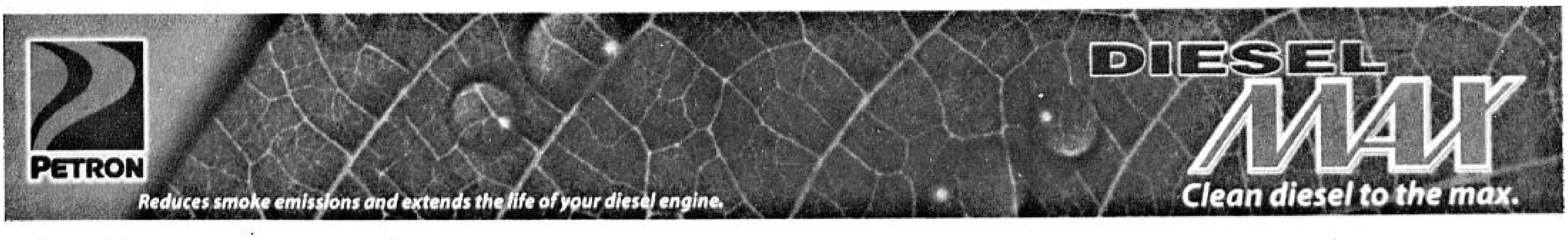

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RP sluggers overall champs with 3 titles

By Trina Ibarle

THE MANILA Smart Eagles nipped Jakarta, 4-3, in extra inning yesterday to cap a three-division championship romp of host Philippines in the Southeast Asian Youth Baseball-Softball Tournament at the Alabang Country Club grounds.

With runners on first and second in the lower eighth, Ace Baquiran laid down a bunt that resulted in a throwing error to Jakarta's first baseman and sent Nikko Dizer home with the winning run.

The Outback Marlins and ATC Mariners accounted for the two other titles for the Philippines.

The Marlins topped the under-19 girls' senior division undefeated, crushing Jakarta in the title game, 10-3, after knocking out defending champion Singapore in the semifinals, 4-1, Saturday.

The Mariners shut out Perth, 9-0, to win the under-12 minor boys championship after a 16-2 whipping of Singapore in the semis.

It was a spectacular finish for the Eagles, who rallied from 1-3 to tie the count in the sixth as Miggy Corcuera smashed a two-out, two-run home run for 3-all.

Corcuera emerged the Kabataan Series' best hitter and home run king with three homers. Justin Zialcita was named Most Valuable Player while Mynard Ocampo was adjudged best pitcher.

Lorraine Uy and series MVP Alex Causapin scored two runs each against the Indonesians in the championship match.

The Marlins swept their four-game schedule in the eliminations.

Fistorama: Negligence or stupid matchmaking?

BARE EYE

Recah Trinidad

THE BRUTALIZED boxer, allegedly deserted by the ring physician, has survived the carnage.

Danilo Peña, knocked out by Wyndell Janiola, No. 5 IBF light flyweight contender, in the Fistorama promotion at the Cantada Boxing Center on Thursday, did not lapse into a coma.

That's the good news.

But there was alarm when Ronnie Nathanielsz, a ringside regular, reported in the Manila Standard yesterday that the ring physician, identified as Dr. Nasser Cruz of the Games and Amusements Board, "left Peña after he was knocked out in the seventh round."

In that sordid mismatch, there was no way the unranked Peña could've been saved by the bell.

But luckily, said Gerard Cantada, son of venue owner Boy Cantada, "the ambulance was still there and we were able to rush Peña to the nearest hospital."

Nathanielsz also quoted premier columnist Quinito Henson of the Star who said he was "shocked that the GAB doctor had left before making sure the fighter was all right."

***

Well, everybody who knows something about boxing has reason to get mad.

You see, once the bout starts, it's the business of a boxer to put the other guy into trouble, and vice versa.

It's considered the height of ring artistry for a fighter to render the opponent unconscious through a punch or a series of blows.

A referee is there not only to implement the rules. The ring official, with power and authority to stop the bout, should see to it that a boxer is not uselessly brutalized.

Unfortunately, savage knockouts cannot be prevented in professional boxing.

This is one of the reasons there's always an assigned physician at ringside.

At the same time, an ambulance is made available, to be alerted during emergencies.

Exactly as in the case last Thursday when, as Gerard Cantada claimed, they had to rush Peña to the hospital.

***

If the allegations against Dr. Cruz, a seasoned GAB physician, were true, he could be criminally liable.

The ring physician had no business stepping out.

If, God forbid, the ring doctor's house happened to be burning at the same time he has a fallen, delirious boxer before him, the physician must stay put.

Those are very serious allegations made against Dr. Cruz.

There should be an immediate investigation of the case.

The question is: Will the Games and Amusements Board, basically a licensing body that lacks power but enjoys all the perks, be apt and willing to investigate someone from its own kitchen?

The GAB should. The allegations were made by no less than the son of the venue owner.

These were backed up by two competent and known journalists.

***

Intrigued by the case, we started placing calls, our humble way of initiating an informal probe.

One reliable source said he talked to Dr. Cruz who claimed he had sufficiently attended to the fallen boxer.

Cruz claimed he did not find any problem. Cruz added he called the hospital the morning after and was assured everything was fine.

Fight records showed Peña suffered serious injury above the left eye.

Dr. Cruz told our source he could no longer control the swelling over Peña's eye.

Well, it's Dr. Cruz's words against those of Henson, Nathanielsz and Gerard Cantada.

Dr. Cruz, said our source, is willing to subject himself to a probe.

But, as a parting word, the ring physician said the blame should be on the "incompetent matchmaker."

"Why did he pit the obscure Peña against a world beater like Wyndel Janiola," the source quoted Dr. Cruz as saying.

Who's the matchmaker?

Here's one tip: Based on his playing credentials, the GAB had apparently erred in allowing him to professionally pit boxers.

In short, the GAB should also be investigating itself.

Spring, AU forge title clash

SPRING Cooking Oil-San Pablo's 7 Lakers stopped Manila-Adamson University, 74-69, Saturday to arrange a showdown with the Falcons for the Panasonic-7 Lakes Cup Invitational basketball tournament at the Aquino gym in San Pablo City.

Veteran Mar Reyes knocked in a triple in the last 10 seconds to give the 7 Lakers the five-point margin they needed to make the finals after finishing in a tie with the Falcons and the UA-Pampanga Pelicans at 2-1 in the tourney hosted by Mayor Pablo Aquino and sponsored by Sulpicio Lines.

The Pelicans whipped Sulpicio Lines-Cagayan de Oro, 88-77, in the other game.

The Falcons emerged No. 1 in the tiebreak with a plus 3 quotient, followed by Spring-SP of Aquino and national shooting champion Nathaniel "Tac" Padilla with minus 1.

The Pelicans came in third at minus 2.

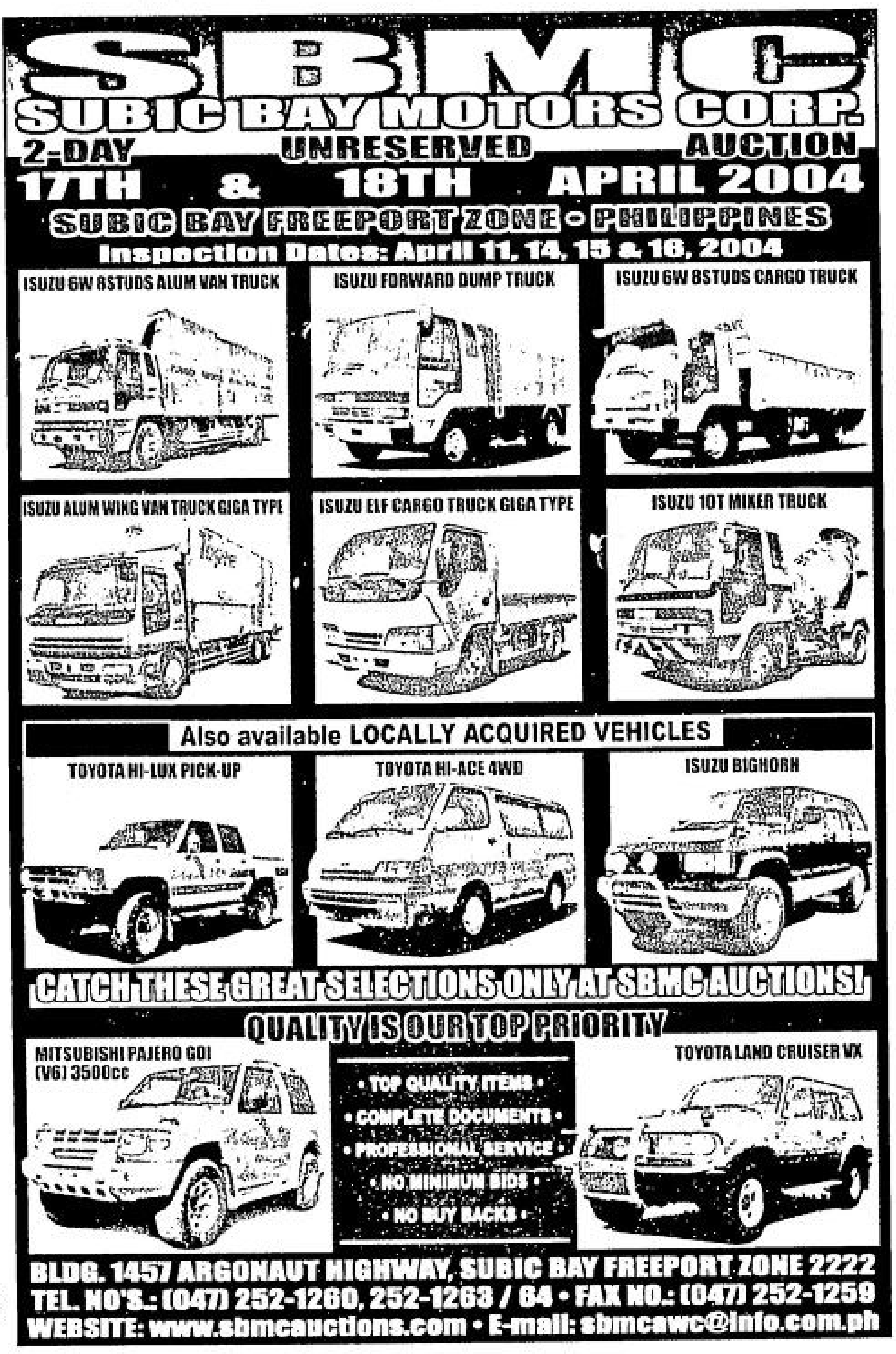
The scores:

First Game

SPRING SP 74—Reyes 18, Manuel 17, Mendoza 9, Serrano 7, Yee 6, Kalaw 5, Caceres 5, Corbin 5, Taguines 2, Lingal 0, Ferma 0.

MANILA-AU 69—Bono 16, Abadia 14, Tagupa 12, Hate 8, Catabay 5, Tiongco 4, Gandarosa 4, Alonzo 3, Hugnatan 2, Poloyapoy 1, Cabahug 0, Tajonera 0.

Quarters: 23-26, 49-38, 64-60, 74-69



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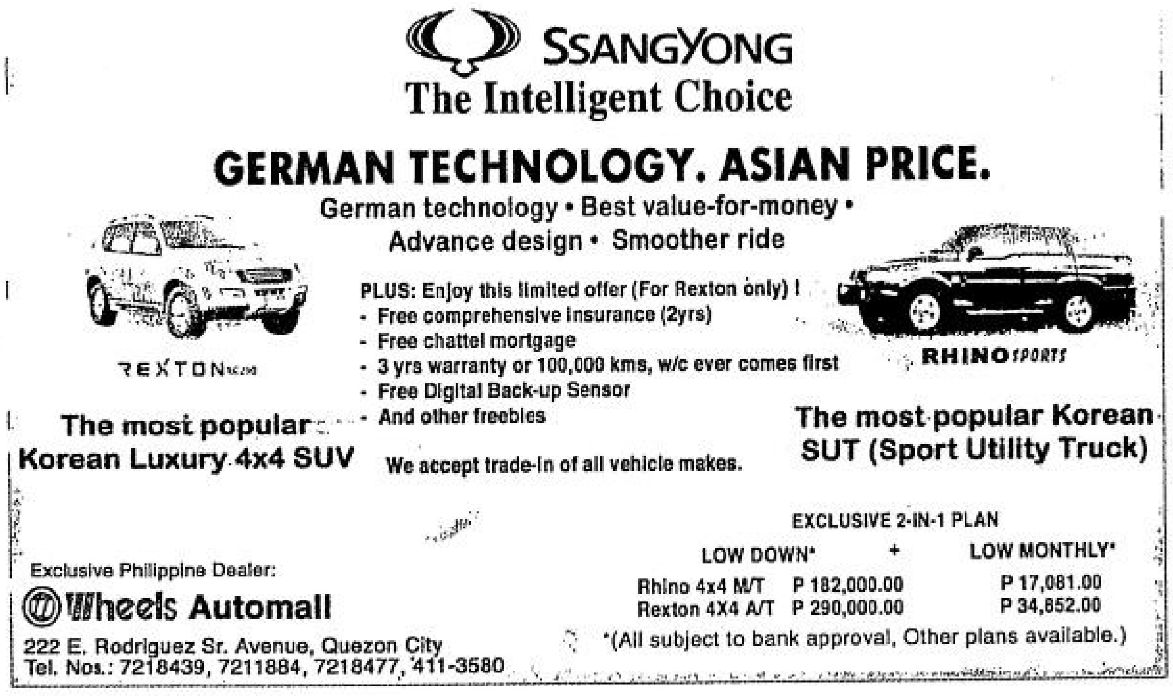

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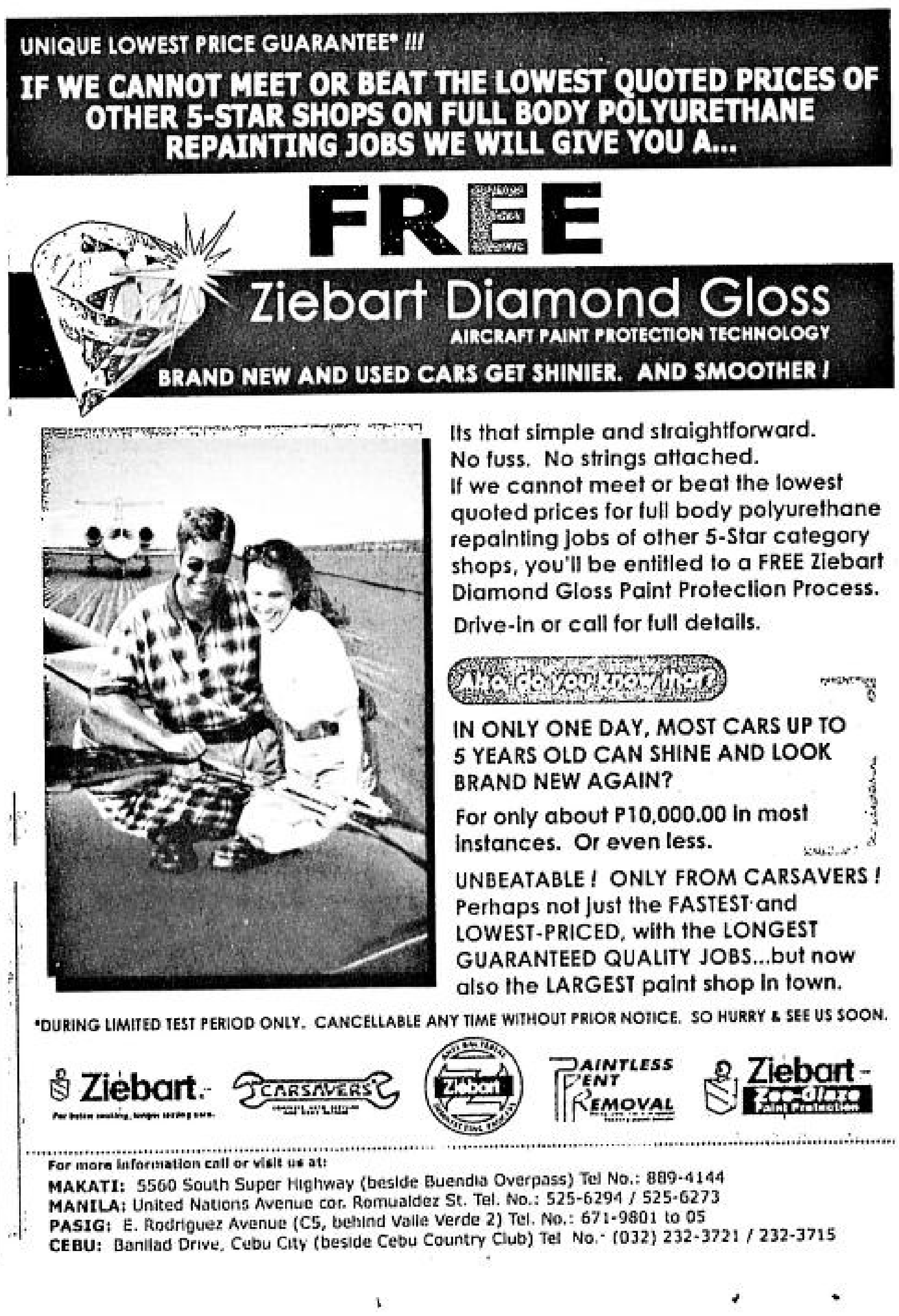

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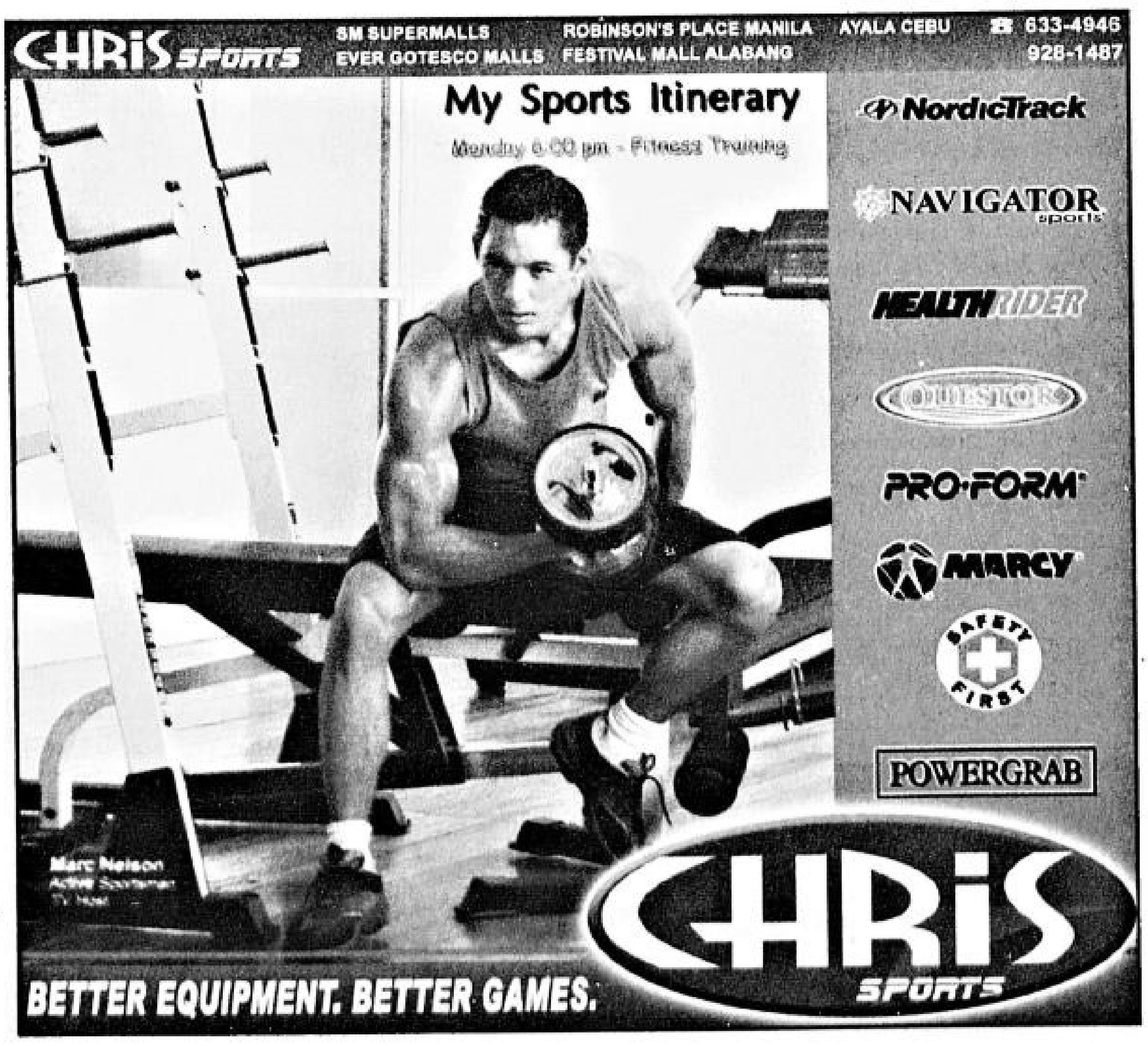

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Tagaytay nips Guangzhou for crown

Final standings:

25.0 points—Tagaytay, Guangzhou (CHI); **22.5**—Mandaluyong, Pasay, Pavlodar (KAZ); **21.5**—Jakarta (INA); **19.5**—Teheran (IRA), Tanauan; **18.5**—Kuala Lumpur (MAS), Samarinda (INA); **17.5**—Kanchipuram (IND); **17**—Dubai (UAE); **16.5**—Sydney (AUS), Ho Chi Minh (VIE), Doha (QAT); **16**—Sanaa (YEM); **9.0**—Hong Kong; **8.5**—Macau, Bandar Seri Begawan

TAGAYTAY—Host Tagaytay made history Saturday night by nipping Guangzhou of China to capture the 14th Asian Cities Chess Championship before a banner crowd at the Tagaytay International Convention Center here.

The Filipinos and the Chinese both blanked their final-round rivals to end up tied with 25 points each, but Tagaytay finished a half-point ahead under the Bucholz tiebreak system to secure the Dubai Cup.

Tagaytay swept Sanaa of Yemen, 4-0, and Guangzhou matched that effort against Doha of Qatar.

It was the first time in 25 years that a team from the Philippines bagged the championship.

Powered by Grandmasters Eugene Torre, Joey Antonio and International Masters Ronald Dableo and Jayson Gonzales, Tagaytay finished with 185 Bucholz points while the Chinese had 184.5 in the event organized by the National Chess Federation of the Philippines.

Mandaluyong, the solo leader in round 7, placed third over giant-killer Pasay City and defending champion Pavlodar of Kazakhstan. All three finished with 22.5 points each.

In the tiebreak, Mandaluyong had 188, Pasay 180.5 and Pavlodar 176.

Besides keeping the silver-gold Dubai Cup trophy for the next two years, Tagaytay shared the combined first and second prize pot of P250,000 with Guangzhou.

Tagaytay achieved many firsts with its rousing triumph. Not only did the hosts break the country's winless spell in the tournament that began in 1979, it also marked the first time that a host squad went on to bag the title.

"This honor is not only for our city but also for our country," said Tagaytay City Mayor Francis Tolentino.

"That was a nerve-wracking win for us. The boys were really determined to win," said Tagaytay team captain Chris Mangulabnan, a businessman and chess patron.

Although Torre had a rocky start in the event, he again showed everyone why he is still very much a force to reckon with.

It was Torre, playing on board 1, who provided the spark for Tagaytay, quickly dispatching Sanaa's Ali Alhalila with the black pieces to foil the Yemeni's King's Indian 4 Pawns Attack in 36 moves.

"I had an up-and-down series. I am happy that I was able to help our country and deliver in the end," said Torre, who was the lone victor in Tagaytay's 2-2 draw with Guangzhou in the third round.

Antonio, on board 2, broke down Sabri Abdulmuawla in 45 moves of a Sicilian Defense Alapin Variation.

Board 3 player Dableo, the 2003 Asian Zonal champion, prevailed over Faraj Yahya in 59 moves of a Slav Defense and went on to earn board gold medal honors with six out of a possible seven points.

Gonzales capped the rout on board 4 with a 43-move victory over Hatim Al-Hadarani in a King's Indian Reverse game.

Needing to sweep its four games to remain in contention, Mandaluyong's title bid ended on board 1 when IM Mark Paragua lost to Tehran's Moradiabadi Elshan.

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Revtex Rocket Glenn Aguilar kisses his trophy after reaffirming his status as Asia's finest rider with a swashbuckling Pro Open victory in the 2004 FIM International Motocross Championships-Motocross Masters of Asia in Puerto Princesa City, Palawan, yesterday. The defending champ, who wound up second in the FIM opener in Bali, Indonesia, fended off the challenge of first-stage winner Tadazaku Ohtsuka of Japan, Aep Dadang of Indonesia and the rest of the champion riders from China, New Zealand and Australia to grab the lead in the six-leg Asia series.

Catubay stuns former Korean WBC champ

UNDERDOG Federico Catubay hammered out a shock split decision victory over former WBC junior flyweight champion Choi Yo-sam of South Korea Saturday night at the 88-Pal-pal Gymnasium in Seoul.

The Cebu-based Catubay, a native of Labason, Zamboanga del Norte, dominated Choi from the start and won the nod of two judges, 97-95 and 96-95. The third judge saw it 96-94 for Choi.

The win is expected to boost the status of the 24-year-old Catubay since Choi is ranked as IBF No. 7, WBC No. 11 and WBA No. 12 in the junior fly class.

The Moray Quijano-trained Catubay raised his record to 13-7-3, with 8 KOs while Choi dropped to 26-4 with 15 KOs.

"He (Catubay) has really come a long, long way. Catubay was just an ordinary fighter from Mindanao who joined our gym many months ago. He has since made a quick turnaround," said sportsman Tony Aldeguer, who owns the ALA Gym where Catubay trains for SGG under manager Sammy Gello-ani.

Catubay prepared for Choi by going through tough sparring sessions against ALA Boy Rocky Fuentes, RP No. 7 minifly Edmund "El Martillo" Velayo and RP No. 8 Donnie Nietes. *Salven L. Lagumbay, contributor*

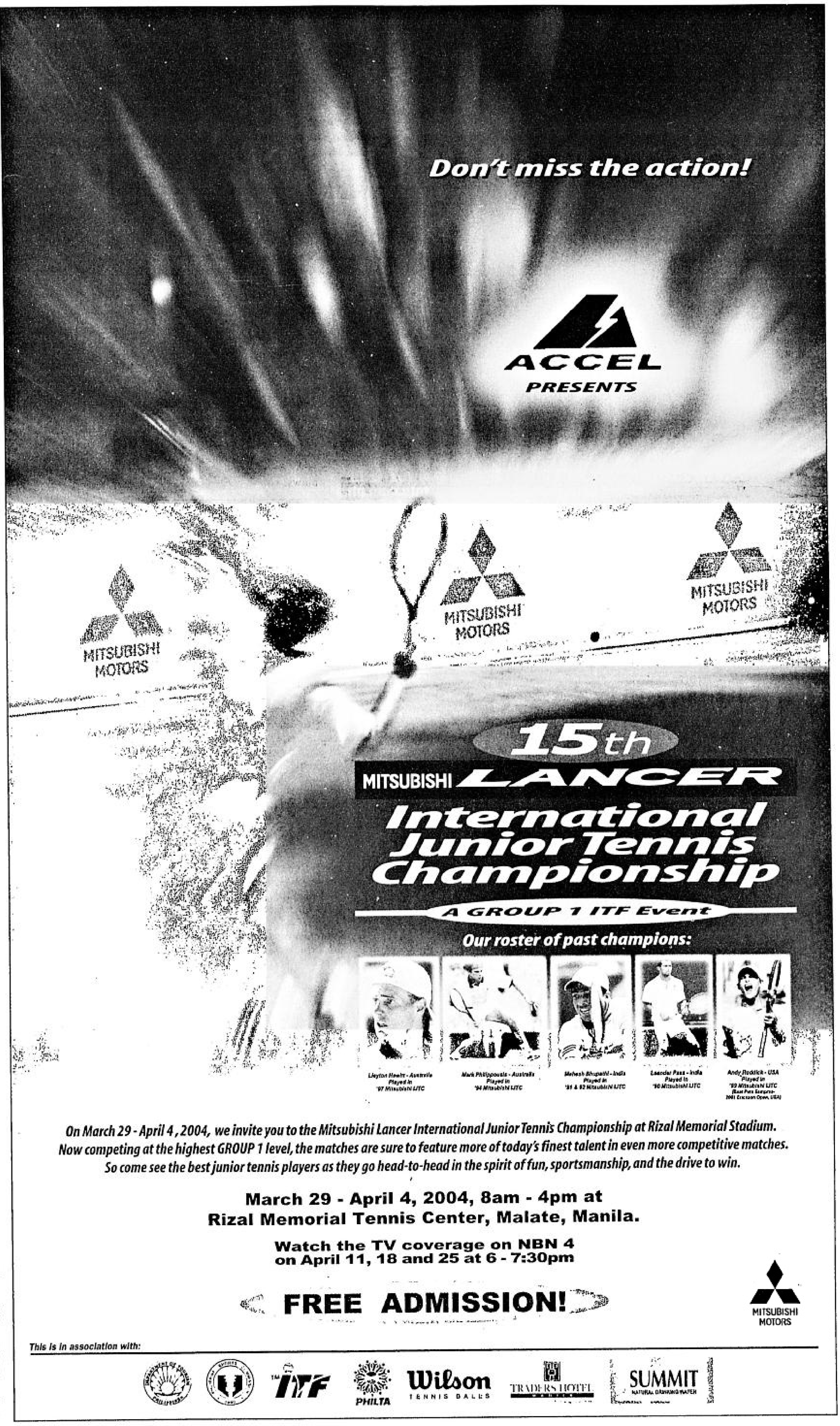
Narvasa talks about bar on US coaches

CHITO Narvasa and the rest of the Basketball Coaches Association of the Philippines (BCAP) officials liven up this week's session of the PSA Forum at the Manila Pavilion.

They are expected to delve on the recent court ruling revoking the working permits previously issued to two high-profile American coaches.

Rod Nazario, business manager of boxing idol Manny Pacquiao, and the men behind the CHED National Tertiary Games are also appearing in the public sports program.

Aired over dzSR Sports Radio, the 10:30 a.m. session is sponsored by Agfa Colors and Red Bull.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Viva, Sunkist rout debuting foes

By Marc Anthony Reyes

VIVA Mineral Water-FEU did away with the pleasantries in Toyota Otis-Letran's maiden game yesterday, scoring a 77-62 rout over the debuting Knights at the start of the second PBL Unity Cup at the Makati Coliseum.

The rude welcome had the Water Force posting double-digit leads early on before opening a 29-point advantage at 52-23 on a three-pointer by Jason Misolas early in the second half.

Sunkist-UST was just as mean in the second game, spoiling Lee Pipes-Ateneo's first appearance with a 79-65 decision.

Toyota Otis, made up of the core of the NCAA champion Letran team, was a big letdown. The Knights came up with just a field goal in the second quarter and trailed 23-47 at halftime.

GAMES TOMORROW *(Makati Coliseum)*
2 p.m.—Welcoat vs BluStar
4 p.m.—Hapee vs Montana

Viva coach Koy Banal said most of the Knights lacked experience although they showed "college spirit and aggressiveness."

Apparently, these were not enough.

The Knights could only make eight of 38 attempts from the floor in the first half, including a 1-of-9 shooting in the second period.

Ronjay Enrile scored the only field goal for Toyota-Letran in the second quarter with a layup that somehow cut Viva's lead to 37-22 with less than four minutes left in the period.

But the Knights didn't have the defense to stop Denok Miranda and Cesar Catli, who responded for the Water Force with back-to-back three-pointers.

"We prepared very hard for this game," said Catli, who topscored with 20 points, including six of 10 from the three-point lane.

The 6-foot-3 Catli, who applied for this year's PBA draft but backed out at the last minute, scored his first three triples successively to set the tone for the Water Force's high-octane game.

"We decided that if we can't surpass the intensity they will show, we should at least match it," added Banal, who hardly missed power forward Gerard Jones, who broke his finger in practice.

Unlike the Knights, the Eagles were able to taste the lead briefly in the first quarter (21-12) before the Tigers asserted themselves.

Sunkist even buried Lee Pipes by 20 points (68-48) midway in the fourth quarter.

The scores:

First Game

VIVA-FEU 77—Catli 20, Isip 10, Santos 10, Miranda 7, Yabut 6, Misolas 5, Barcellano 6, Ybanez 4, Rizada 4, Raneses 3, Garcia 2, Co 0, Santiago 0, Sison 0.

TOYOTA-LETRAN 62—Aban 13, Enrile 11. Daa 10, Bautista 7, Aldave 6, Dula 6, Moody 4, Pinera 4, Rodriguez 1, Anabo 0, Valdez 0.

Quarters: 24-15, 47-23, 60-43, 77-62.

Second Game

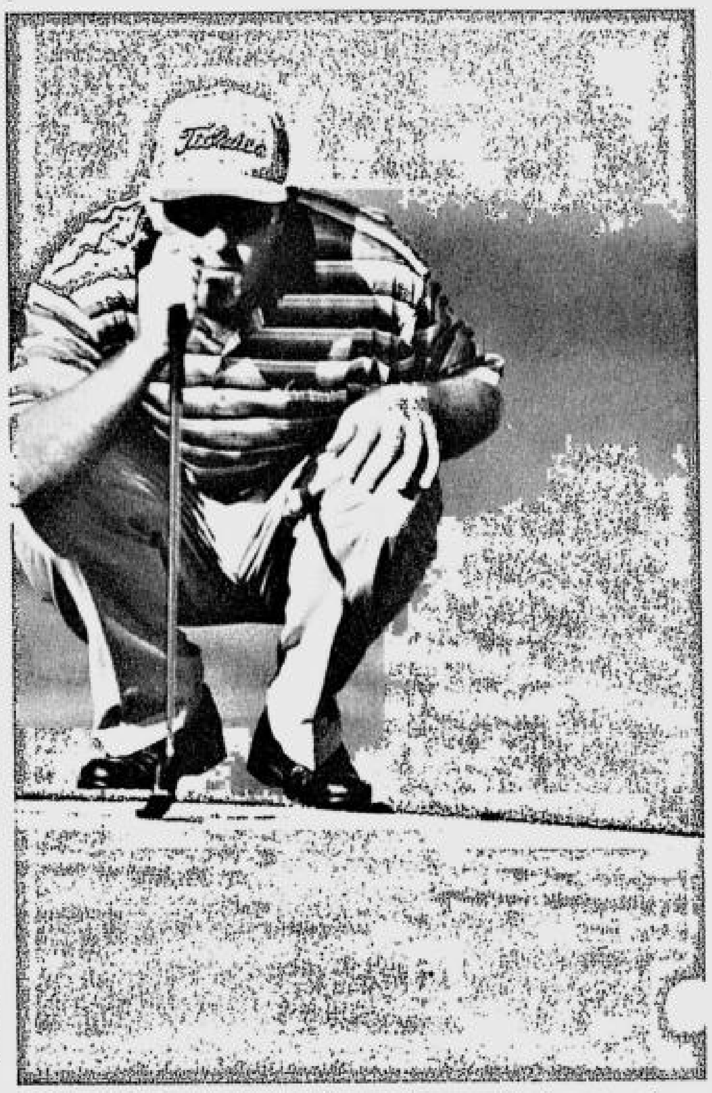
SUNKIST 79—Vizcarra 14, Patrimonio 11, Paterneo 9, Coronel 8, Capati 8, Luanzon 7, Latoreno 6, Magsumbol 6, Hubalde 6, Compton 4, Santos 0, Pribhdas 0, Raterta 0, Saumalinog 0.

LEE PIPES 65—Fonacier 16, Del Rosario 12, Manalo 9, Tenorio 7, Intal 6, Domingo 4, Gelig 4, Membrere 3, Basco 2, Cruz 2, Elmido 0, Quimpo 0.

Quarters: 12-21, 39-32, 59-44, 79-65

PLAYERS CHAMPIONSHIP

Scott surges into the lead; Tiger 6 adrift



LICKLITER, just two shots off the pace, lines up a birdie putt on the 17th hole. He holed the putt and then closed out with another bird. AP

PONTE VEDRA BEACH, Florida—Adam Scott had a 3-under 69 at The Players Championship on Saturday to take a two-shot lead into a final round that figures to be as entertaining as the course itself.

As wild as it was, Scott might not even have the lead when he tees off in the final group. Scott was at 10-under 206 and had 19 players within six shots—including Tiger Woods.

"I'm far from winning the event," Scott said. "There's a full leaderboard of the best players behind me."

Frank Lickliter, who lives on the TPC at Sawgrass, closed with three straight birdies for a 68.

He was joined at 208 by Kevin Sutherland, a co-leader going into the second round, who scratched out a 73 despite a bad ruling that led to a bogey on the par-5 16th.

Another shot back was a large group that included Ernie Els (72), Kenny Perry (69) and Phil Mickelson (72), who made another solid recovery on the 18th to save par. Vijay Singh (72) was right behind, along with Craig Parry, whose 8-under 64 showed that anything goes at any time in this tournament.

Playing early in slightly softer conditions, Perry had two eagles and six birdies in his round of 64 and now joins a long list of players chasing the $1.4-million prize in the PGA Tour's richest event.

Add the world's No. 1 player to the mix. Woods wasted a great round—and a great chance to get himself into serious contention—when he hit 7-iron into the bleachers on the 18th hole to cap off a bogey-bogey finish for a 68.

Still, he was six shots behind in a tie for 16th, a strong improvement from the bottom of the pack two days ago.

"A lot of things can happen on this golf course," Woods said. *AP*

SPORTSWATCH

Sales fights Rodriguez for PPBL semis slot

IT WILL be quickness against power as Mark "The Slam Man" Sales faces Jimboy "Pretty Boy" Rodriguez in the quarterfinal round of the Philippine Pro-Boxing League National Invitational junior bantamweight championship. The cat-quick Sales comes off an impressive unanimous decision victory over Ronnie "The Ransom" Cañete to advance to the last eight, while the power-hitting Rodriguez struggled against the young John Ray "Velocity" Verano before winning by split decision in this unique tournament supported by Tanduay Rhum and Lactovitale. Sales, a veteran of many international fights, is confident that his speed and experience will be his key to victory. Rodriguez, a KO specialist, hopes to neutralize these by delivering power punches. The two fighters vie for a semifinal slot in the grueling four-stage stepladder tournament in the bout set Wednesday night at 9 p.m. on IBC-13.

Coronel, Garcia top Beam-Zest-O race

MARTIN Coronel and Stephanie Garcia showed up the 400-strong field to win their respective divisions yesterday in the Beam-Zest-O Patakbong Pinoy family fun run at Barangay Sumilang in Pasig City. Coronel and Garcia won cash prizes and medals in the race organized by the Media Runners and Sports Promotions and sponsored by Beam Toothpaste and Zest-O Juice Drinks. Coronel towed Roel Logronio and Crispin Fuasa to the finish, with Baby Basco and Nicka Concepcion winding up second and third, respectively in the distaff race. Jonel Promotions head Nelson Macaraig said he plans to duplicate the race in several barangays in the country. The next race will be held in Pagsanjan, Laguna on April 4.

Milo Best Center clinic starts April 1

MILO Best Center, the country's most popular and successful youth basketball program, unwraps its NCR (National Capital Region) summer schedule on April 1 to 29 at the Ateneo College covered courts. Level 1, 2 and 3 classes will be held from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m., while another set of level 1, 2, 3 and 5 sessions will be conducted from 1-4 p.m. on Mondays and Thursdays. On Tuesdays and Fridays, level 1 and 2 and 4, 5 and 6 clinics will be staged from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. Tuition is P1,900 inclusive of uniform T-shirt and a 25th anniversary backpack, according to Milo BEST center official Monica Jorge. Interested parties may visit the BEST Center at 34 Scout Lozano corner Scout Reyes, Barangay Laging Handa, Quezon City (tel. nos. 411-6260 and 372-3065/66) and the Dansei Groom Shop/Sensei Salon on the 5th Floor of Manila Pavilion Hotel on UN Ave., Manila (525-8191).

Kagitingan hosts NREA invitationals

THE NATIONAL Real Estate Association invitational golf tournament, also called the 6th Annual NREA Chairman's Cup, will be held on April 16 at the Kagitingan Golf Course in Fort Bonifacio, Makati City. Tee-off time is from 6:30-9 a.m., with Sen. Rodolfo G. Biazon leading the ceremonial drive. Architect Nestor S. Mangio Jr., NREA national president, said the tournament aims to promote camaraderie among private and government housing executives. Among the invited guests are Pampanga Gov. Lito Lapid, NBI director Reynaldo G. Wycoco, Lt. Gen. Efren L. Abu; Tourism Secretary Obet Pagdanganan, Rep. Ruffy Biazon, Sen. Manny Villar; Mandaluyong Mayor Benhur Abalos, Jose Solis, Dante Liban and NREA chair Ka Pepe Manalad, the tournament honoree.

'Slasher Cup ng Masa' resumes tonight

MORE than 60 fights are on tap when the Slasher Cup ng Masa 6-Cock Derby resumes at 6 p.m. today at the Roligon Mega Cockpit. After two days of battle, only five entries remained unscathed with three wins each. They were Gerry Perez (Gerry Nigel), Edwin Recio and Alan Tan (4M Hatawan sa Roligon June 28), Engineer Samonte (Don Bosco), Erwin Diamante (Gerona Cockpit) and Dax Guanzon (Darling Dahan 2). "I am inviting breeders to take part because, as of yesterday, only five entries have scored three wins each, so it's still anybody's game," said cockpit owner Rolly Ligon. The guaranteed prize of P1.5 million will be awarded regardless of the actual number of entries, he added. Entry fee is P8,800 with a P3,300 minimum bet. Derby host Rey Briones said provincial entries may field six cocks during the championship round on March 31. For inquiries, call 833-2275, 833-1638, 852-9774 or 852-9812 (look for Aubrey, Shirley or Tiling). Meanwhile, the third edition of Cash Premyo 3-Cock Derby unfolds on Saturday, with more than 120 fights scheduled and a guaranteed prize of P300,000. Entry fee is P4,400.

FIESTA CONF
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THE NEW officers of the PBA Press Corps take their oath of office from PBA commissioner Noli Eala (left) recently. From Eala's left: Theodore Jurado (Taliba), auditor; Malou Aquino (Abante), secretary; Noli Cortez (Malaya) president; June Navarro of the INQUIRER, vice president; Reuel Vidal (Manila Standard), treasurer. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

Jungolfers return to action today

AN EAGER field of 140 jungolfers, including 12 from Korea and Japan, will dispute the top awards in six different age groups in the opening leg of the 2004 Philippine Junior Golf Tour starting today at the Canlubang north and Riviera executive courses.

Leading the roster are last year's international tournament winners and Philippine Sportswriters Association awardees Jayvie Agojo, Dottie Ardina, Allenby Jiro Ramos and Miguel Tabuena as well as Wolen Superal and Ma-an Legaspi.

The 17-year-old Agojo will be playing in her final season as a jungolfer expected to dominate the girls' Class A (15-17) division the way she did in the lower age groups the past decade or so.

Ardina, a former world junior champ, plays her home course as a Class D favorite like Tabuena, Superal competes in a new division (Class C) after completing an unbeaten run in Class D last year while US Kids winner Ramos is set to face tough rivals JR Gonzales and JP de Claro in Class E.

Supporting the RP Jungolf Tour are Samsung, DHL Philippines and Philippine Airlines and sports patron Ricky Razon of ICTSI.

In the field are 10 Koreans being trained in various local courses including the Class B favorite Sungbin Yoon, Emmanuel Kishida, son of a Japanese expat and Joshua Cabrera, son of a Filipino couple now based in Bermuda.

The boys' Class A cast is loaded with the country's young aces like Fil-Am individual champ Nonoy Negrido, Tonton Asistio, IG Gutierrez, Justin Tambunting and Miko Alejandro.

Junior Golf Foundation of the Philippines president Luigi Tabuena announced that the national ranking system will be introduced in the tournament wherein jungolfers will earn points not just for their final placings but also for their daily scores.

RIFA REVELATION

SOUTHRIDGE School's Midget C team show off their trophy after beating Ateneo de Manila University for the Rizal Football Association (Rifa) championship recently. Kneeling (from left): Daniel Kahn, Karl Peralta, Nathan Alquiros (MVP), Andy Tan, Patrick Gonzales, Miguel Itchon, Rafael Añover. Standing (same order): Coach Jing Jambre, Paco Cojuangco, Aebert Fernandez, Jaio Aquino, Greggy Yang, Anthony Sunico, Nicollo Ordoñez and Coach Ryan.

Lucena, Batangas fighters dominate

HOST Lucena and Batangas split honors with five gold medals each at the close of the two-day Summer Sports at SM supermalls taekwondo competition at SM Lucena last weekend.

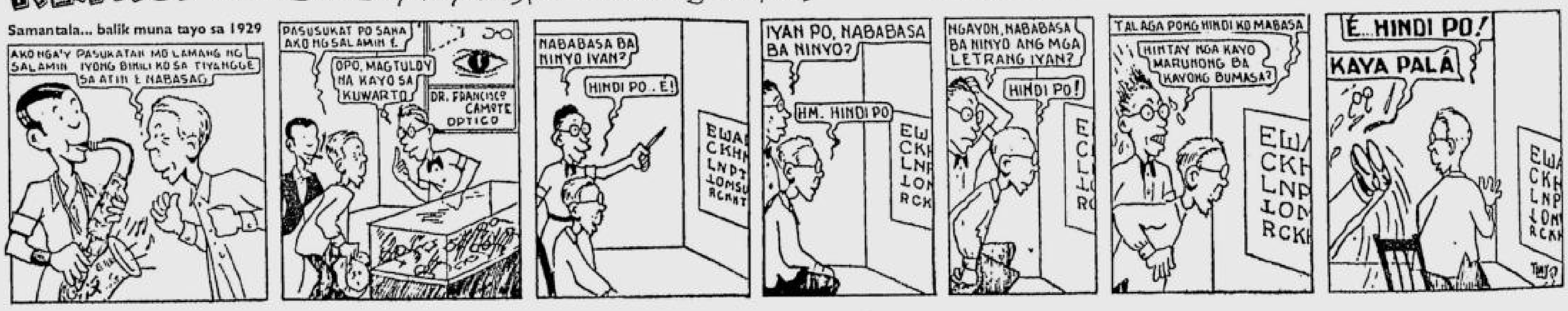
Kylle Calayan beat John Ackim Jacela of Tayabas to rule Group 4 while Ted Echevarria topped Group 5 by beating another Tayabas bet, Brian Paredes, to spark Lucena's five-gold romp in the tournament. Also winning for Lucena were Kevin Jamin (Group 6), Christian Tangayod (Group 7) and Vincent Panopio (Group 8).

Eric Enriquez bested Kit Riley Torres in Group 1 to kick off Batangas' surge in the event serving as the start of an 11-stage taekwondo competitions held under the auspices of the Philippine Taekwondo Association and organized by the International Management Group.

Eugene Torres beat John Michael Opricio to win the gold in Group 2; Gean Untalan ruled Group 3 by disposing of Aaron Mejia; Jaxel Gilera beat Pio Ong for the Group 9 gold, while Jigger Gilera topped Group 10 by downing Henry Mejia.

KENKOY KLASIKS by Tony Velasquez celebrating 75 years

Liwayway 10.25.29 from the LOPEZ MUSEUM collection / Courtesy of KOMIKS CAFE / INQ EDITION 3.29.04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AKO NGA'Y PASUKATAN MO LAMANG NG SALAMIN IYONG BINILI KO SA TIYANGGE SA ATIN E NABASAG
PASUSUKAT PO SANA AKO NG SALAMIN E.
OPO, MAGTULOY NA KAYO SA KUWARTO
DR. FRANCISCO CAMOTE OPTICO
NABABASA BA NINYO IYAN?
HINDI PO . E!
IYAN PO, NABABASA BA NINYO?
HM. HINDI PO
NGAYON, NABABASA BA NINYO ANG MGA LETRANG IYAN?
HINDI PO!
TALAGA PONG HINDI KO MABASA
HINTAY NGA KAYO MARUNONG BA KAYONG BUMASA?
E...HINDI PO!
KAYA PALÁ

Japanese steals show

ARAKAWA: Stirring "Turandot" program AFP

DORTMUND, Germany—Shizuka Arakawa of Japan was the surprise winner at the world figure skating championships Saturday, ending the reign of defending champion Michelle Kwan, who was third.

Arakawa skated a technically bold program packed with difficult jumps to overtake American Sasha Cohen, who was poised to win her first world title entering the free skate.

The 22-year-old Japanese skater executed seven triple jumps, including a combination none of her rivals attempted. She won a perfect 6.0 mark—rarely given for technical merit. The artistry marks for her stirring "Turandot" program were also high, between 5.8 and 5.9.

Dethroned

She dethroned Kwan, the five-time world champion, who was attempting to set a US record with a sixth title. Kwan downgraded one of her jumps from a triple lutz to a double at the end of her skate and did not have a triple-triple.

Still, she was second in the free skate with a fast, fluid and elegant program skated to "Tosca."

Judges rewarded her with six 6.0 marks for artistry, giving her a career total of 50 perfect marks in Olympic-eligible competition. She has won nine world championship medals nine in a row.

An unidentified man wearing ice skates jumped onto the rink right before Kwan's skate, delaying her performance for at least four minutes. After taking off his shirt and donning a ballet tutu, he was forced off the ice by five security guards. Organizers identified him as Ron Bensimhon, a 30-year-old Canadian, and said he was briefly detained and then released.

The incident sparked a debate about the security at the rink.

"I thought he might have a gun... so I got off the ice," Kwan said.

Ranked third in Japan, Arakawa was not favored to win, having come to the event as an outsider. She was eighth in last year's worlds.

Always a strong jumper, she took the sport to a new level Saturday with her triple lutz-triple toe-double loop—never before done at a world championship. Immediately after, she easily peeled off a triple-triple combination—meaning 14 rotations in the air in the first 30 seconds.

"I'm so happy that I could put every emotion and all the power into my free skating," she said afterward. "I'm glad that all of my three programs at this worlds worked."

Triple jump

Cohen flubbed a triple jump, was unsteady on several others and finished second. It was, though, her highest placement ever in a world championship.

"I don't know why I missed the takeoff on the triple salchow. I was focused and ready to go for it," said a disappointed Cohen. "I had a really wacky takeoff, and I wasn't able to rotate."

In December, Cohen split with her coach, Tatiana Tarasova, who took up with Arakawa three weeks ago. *AP*

Long wait ends for Torion and his fans

CLEAN LIVING

Manolo R. Iñigo

PBA Commissioner Noli Eala won the hearts of basketball fans for allowing suspended Red Bull ace pointguard Jimwell Torion to play again in the league, but the real winner of Eala's popular decision is the Philippine Basketball Association.

Before a hometown crowd—the largest ever to watch a basketball game at the new Cebu Coliseum on March 25—Eala announced that he was lifting the eight-month suspension imposed on Torion and allowing the Photokina playmaker to resume his aborted career on April 18 against Talk 'N Text, the very same team that Red Bull played when Torion received the heaviest penalties in the 29-year history of the PBA.

A son of a poor fisherman from Argao, Cebu, the 28-year-old Torion was suspended for eight months and fined P70,000—the longest and biggest ever since 1975—for committing a hard foul that broke the nose of TNT's Jimmy Alapag during the Red Bull's quarterfinal loss in the Reinforced Conference last Nov. 19. That decision did not sit well with many people, including Red Bull coach Yeng Guiao, who said the decision was grossly unfair to Torion and the Red Bull management. "As the league commissioner," Guiao stressed, "Noli Eala's duty is to dispense justice and fairness to all."

Now that Eala has shown that he is fair and level-headed after all, I am commending him for giving a repentant Torion another chance to play in the PBA because playing basketball is his only bread and butter.

"I have learned my lesson and it won't happen again," said a teary-eyed Torion. "Playing in this league is the only way I know to help my family." Torion is the sole breadwinner in a family of five, the youngest barely four months old. He is also sending to school a younger sister, Vivian, a nursing student at the Trinity College. As a result of his suspension, Torion was forced to return his brand-new car to recover P200,000 of his P250,000 down payment and lost his monthly salary of P275,000.

With the 5-foot-8 Torion playing in the pro league again, the fans are now assured of total commitment because he plays with raw courage, speed and fierce determination to win even against his much taller and more experienced rivals. In my mind, Torion ranks with Davonn Harp, Mick Pennisi, Enrico Villanueva, Lordy Tugade and Junthy Valenzuela as one of the most important players in the team owned by much respected George Chua, a sincere and honest man who always speaks in measured tone, showing no upper-class snottiness in the way he treats people.

For his part, Eala said, "I believe we have already sent a strong message (to Torion and to all the players) that the PBA will not tolerate improper conduct on and off the court. Clearly, we've seen that Jimwell has been very remorseful and, hopefully, he has learned his lesson from the suspension."

Torion came to Manila in the late 1990s, making his debut with the Red Bull team in the Philippine Basketball League and, later, in the PBA. His early years promised nothing lofty. "Jimwell and I come from poor families," said his longtime friend and teammate, Junthy Valenzuela.

In 2000, a few weeks before the start of the PBA season, Torion figured in a career-threatening car accident. He survived the crash and underwent several operations to restore his mangled face. Soon after, Torion rejoined his team when he was forgiven after admitting he drank two bottles of beer during a party in Ermita.

In 2003, he was sacked by the PBA for drug abuse, but he was reinstated several months later upon passing a drug addiction and alcohol test, admitting—instead of contesting—the controversial drug-testing procedure. He said he only tried the banned substance to celebrate a team victory with his old friends in Cebu City.

"I admire Jimwell for his guts in admitting his mistake and his efforts to rehabilitate himself," Eala said afterward.

In the PBA, Torion became an overnight success, playing with raw courage, cat-quick reflexes and long-range shooting ability. "He's always good to watch," said a basketball diehard. Still, Torion should heed the advice to control his misdirected deeds of derring-do, the sooner, the better.

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THORPE competes in the men's 200-meter freestyle heats. REUTERS

Thorpe back in pool, cruises to 200-m freestyle heat win

SYDNEY, Australia—Ian Thorpe was back in the pool Sunday at the Australian swim championships, a day after he was disqualified from the 400-meter freestyle race after falling from the starting blocks.

Thorpe is the defending Olympic champion in the 400 and current world record holder. But he will not be allowed to compete at Athens in August in the 400 because he did not finish first or second in the race at the Australian trials.

On Sunday, Thorpe cruised to victory in his 200-meter freestyle heat in a time of 1 minute, 49.30 seconds at the Sydney International Aquatic' Center, about five seconds outside his world mark. Thorpe also holds the world record over 800 meters, a non-Olympic event.

The small crowd gave the triple Olympic gold medalist warm applause after his win. He will be back in the pool later Sunday for the 200 semifinal, with the final scheduled for Monday.

Thorpe appealed his disqualification on Saturday but a referee and a three-person Australian Swimming jury of appeal dismissed his case.

The 21-year-old Thorpe appeared to overbalance on the blocks and fell into the water before the official start of his heat. He then got out of the pool and returned to the blocks with the rest of the competitors.

But meet referee John Keppie walked over to Thorpe's No. 4 block and disqualified him.

Thorpe's disqualification in the 400, and his decision not to contest individual medley events at Athens, means he will only likely race in the 100 and 200 freestyle events and three relays.

Thorpe's coach Tracey Menzies on Sunday said Thorpe planned no further appeals.

Meanwhile, Melbourne's Sunday Herald Sun newspaper declared "He's sunk" on its front page following Thorpe's shock disqualification.

Australia's Prime Minister John Howard led the national outpouring of grief.

"I think it's a tragedy that arguably one of the greatest swimmers this country has produced is not going to be performing for his country in his prime event," Howard told Australian television on Sunday.

Swimmers and politicians called for a rule change to allow Thorpe to shoot for Olympic history by trying to win the 400 meters at three successive Games.

Thorpe's disqualification was upheld by Australian Swimming (AS) on Saturday despite two appeals by the champion. *AP, AFP*

CAREER HIGH

LeBron does it all as Cavs edge Nets

CLEVELAND—LeBron James had a career-high 41 points and 13 assists to lead Cleveland over the New Jersey Nets, 107-104, Saturday, snapping the Cavaliers' four-game losing streak and keeping them in the playoff hunt.

"I hate losing. I don't like losing. I seized the opportunity for us to win and I was able to capture it," said James, who became the youngest player to score 40 or more points in an NBA game.

James scored the winning basket with 12 seconds left after tipping a pass by Richard Jefferson. Kedrick Brown grabbed the deflection and got it to James who drove half the court for a left-handed layup, making it 105-104.

Cavaliers coach Paul Silas said it was by far James' best performance.

"We needed a big night from him and he just carried us," Silas said. "He just was simply awesome. He did everything we needed to get the victory."

James shot 15-for-29 from the floor and 10-for-10 from the line for his first 40-point game. He also had six rebounds and three steals.

Carlos Boozer had 21 points and 11 rebounds, and Zydrunas Ilgauskas added 17 with 10 rebounds for the Cavaliers.

Jefferson had a season-high 35 points for the Nets.

In Auburn Hills, Michigan, Tayshaun Prince scored 20 points and Richard Hamilton added 18 to lift Detroit over short-handed' New York, 100-85.

Detroit played without Rasheed Wallace (back), but the Knicks were down to just nine healthy players with Allan Houston (left quadriceps), Penny Hardaway (groin) and Tim Thomas (groin) all sidelined.

Ben Wallace added 12 points and 12 rebounds for the Pistons, who ended a two-game losing streak, while Chauncey Billups had 11 points and 13 assists.

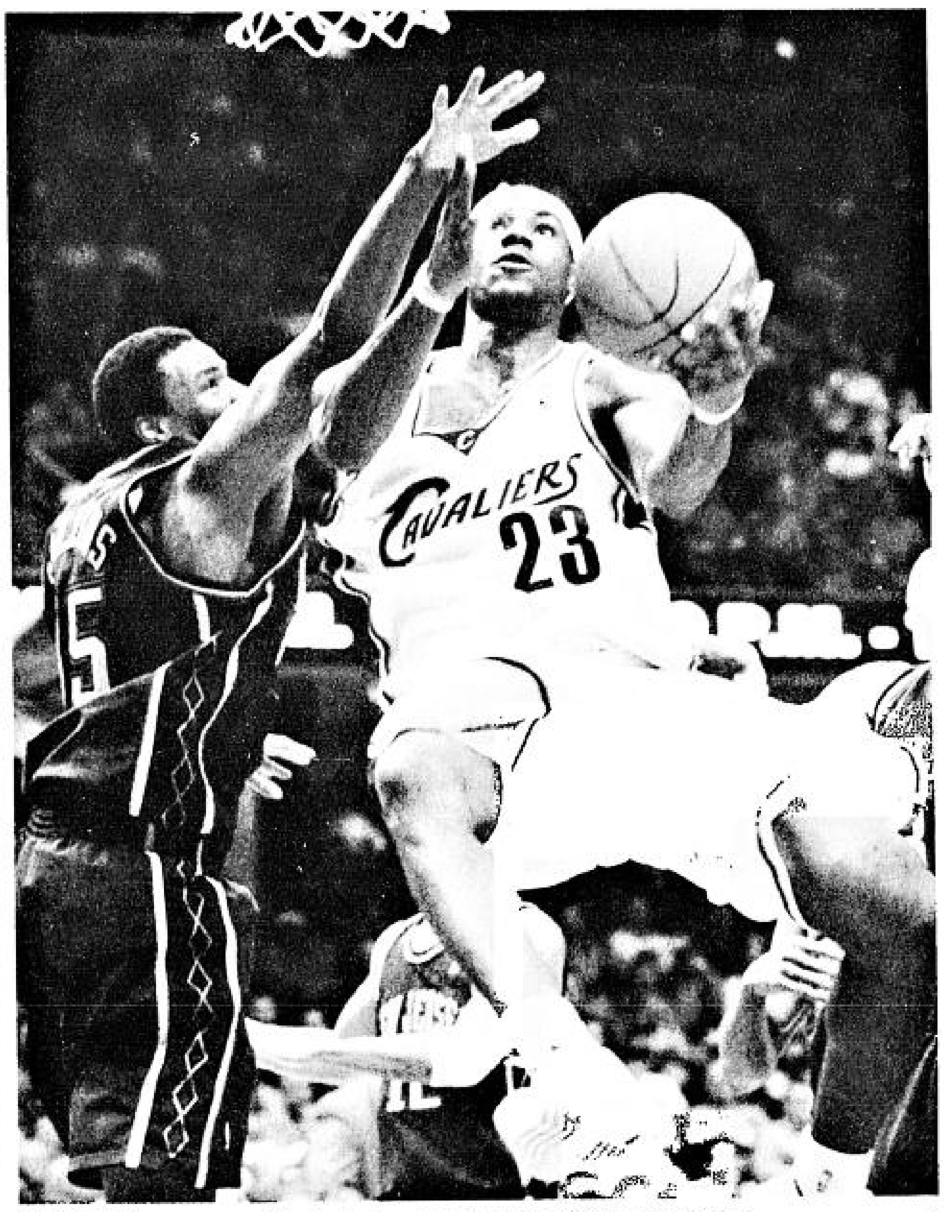
DerMarr Johnson led the Knicks with 17, and Vin Baker added 16, his highest point total since joining New York.

In San Antonio, Hedo Turkoglu and Tim Duncan had 14 points each as San Antonio routed Phoenix, 105-76.

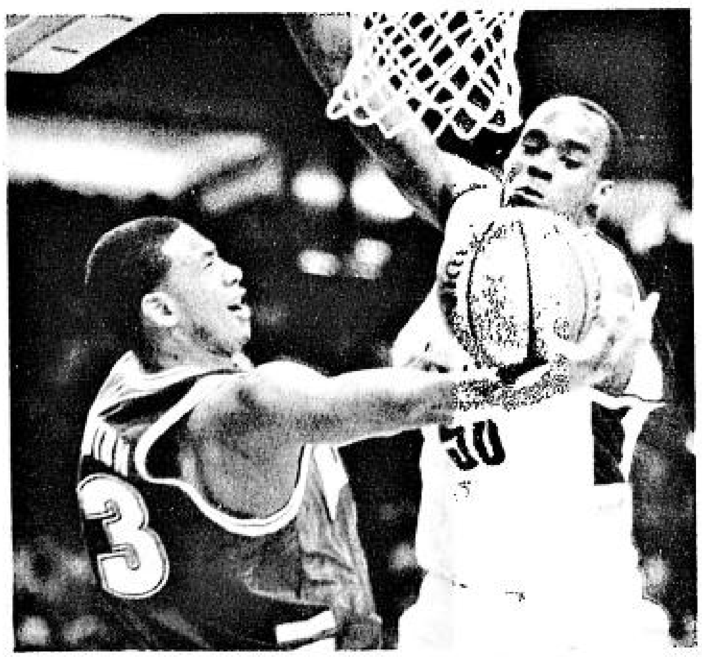
The Spurs took control early against the lowly Suns, opening the game with an 18-5 run. San Antonio shot 57 percent and grabbed 16 rebounds en route to a 31-13 lead after one quarter.

Tony Parker added 12 for the Spurs, who gave their starters plenty of rest. Amare Stoudemire led the Phoenix with 20 points but shot just 8-of-19 from the field, including 1-of-6 to start the game. *AP*

Complete results: Atlanta 97, Chicago 88; Cleveland 107, New Jersey 104; Detroit 100, New York 85; San Antonio 105, Phoenix 76; Utah 85, Denver 83; Portland 115, Seattle 108 (ot); Minnesota 98, LA Clippers 82. *AP*



JAMES (23) soars toward the basket against New Jersey Nets' Jason Collins. AP



CONNECTICUT's Emeka Okafor (right) tries to block the shot of Alabama's Kennedy Winston. AP

76ers stay alive sans Iverson

CLEARWATER, Florida—The Philadelphia 76ers just might be a better team without Allen Iverson.

In their last eight games minus the injured Iverson, the Sixers are 7-1 and have moved back into the playoff race in the Eastern Conference. The All-Star guard is sidelined with a sore right knee, an injury that might not have kept him out of the lineup in past years.

The Sixers (31-42) beat Dallas, Phoenix and Cleveland this week after losing their previous three games with Iverson. His status for the remaining nine games is uncertain.

"I think that they are just getting after it," interim coach Chris Ford said after Friday's 86-71 victory over the Cavaliers. "They enjoy playing with one another right now. They're just working hard. Whoever we have left standing is out there working hard."

The Sixers had won four straight games before Iverson clashed again with Ford, who took over on an interim basis after Randy Ayers was fired on Feb. 9. Iverson refused to play in a loss to Detroit on March 14 after being told by Ford he would come off the bench because he had missed the previous three games with an injury.

IVERSON

Iverson's first confrontation with Ford came when he was fined for missing practice one day after playing in the All-Star game.

After sitting on the bench in street clothes in Detroit, Iverson returned the next game and the Sixers lost the three games he played, before he went out again. One year after playing all 82 regular-season games for the first time in his career, Iverson has missed a career-high 25 games to various injuries.

"Why is it just without Allen? We have four guys out," point guard Eric Snow said. "You're going to talk about who's out, talk about everybody. It's a team game. That's why we have 12, 13 guys."

Iverson is joined on the sideline by forward Glenn Robinson (elbow) and centers Marc Jackson (foot) and Derrick Coleman (knee). Still, the Sixers are within 1 1/2 games of the Celtics for the final playoff spot. They play at Boston on Sunday night.

The Sixers, who went to the NBA Finals in 2001 and have made the playoffs the last five years, are 9-2 without Iverson and Robinson, their two top scorers. *AP*

UConn, Oklahoma cagers gain Final 4

NEW YORK—Ben Gordon scored 36 points and Rashad Anderson 28 to lead Connecticut into the Final Four with an 87-71 win over Alabama in the Phoenix Regional final of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Tournament Saturday.

In the other Elite Eight game, John Lucas hit a three-pointer with 6.9 seconds to go to help Oklahoma State Cowboys beat top-ranked St. Joseph's, 64-62.

Second seed Connecticut (31-6) dominated the first half, going up 53-29, and never lost control as they earned the first spot in next Saturday's Final Four in San Antonio.

Gordon was one shy of his career-best points total while Anderson achieved a personal best to send the Huskies into the national semifinals against the winner of Sunday's Duke-Xavier game.

A late 17-4 run at the end of the first half gave Connecticut their big halftime advantage and eighth-seeded Alabama were never closer than 14 points the rest of the way.

Connecticut's All-America center Emeka Okafor played only 19 minutes and scored two points.

He added nine rebounds and blocked five shots but all came in the first half. *Reuters*

Federer bucks upset ax; Roddick, Agassi triumph

KEY BISCAYNE, Florida—Roger Federer kept shanking shots. He sailed one forehand 20 feet (6 meters) long, popped another 80 feet (24 meters) high, blew a lead and found himself trailing in the third set.

Then the world's No. 1 player rallied, winning the final three games and final six points Saturday night to edge Nikolay Davydenko, 6-2, 3-6, 7-5, in the second round of the Nasdaq-100 Open.

Battling gusty wind and recovering from an illness that curtailed his practice schedule, Federer committed 36 unforced errors, including a handful of ugly shots. He failed to convert five consecutive break-point chances in the final set before a forehand winner down the line gave him a 6-5 lead, and he then served out the two-hour match at love.

While Davydenko came up short, Vince Spadea pulled off one upset and might be on the verge of another. Playing himself into contention for a spot on the US Davis Cup team, Spadea beat Marat Safin, 7-6 (7), 6-7 (4), 6-4.

Andy Roddick, who will lead the US team against Sweden, showed he's ready for Davis Cup—and perhaps a title run in Key Biscayne. Seeded No. 2, he overpowered Karol Beck, 6-2, 6-4.

No. 4 Andre Agassi, bidding for his seventh Key Biscayne title, had only one unforced error in the first set and beat Mariano Zabaleta, 6-0, 7-6 (1).

On the women's side, No. 2 Venus Williams successfully began her bid for a fourth Key Biscayne title. Limited to just seven matches since July because of injuries, she double-faulted six times but beat Jie Zheng 6-4, 6-4. *AP*

WILLIAMS returns a serve from Jie. REUTERS

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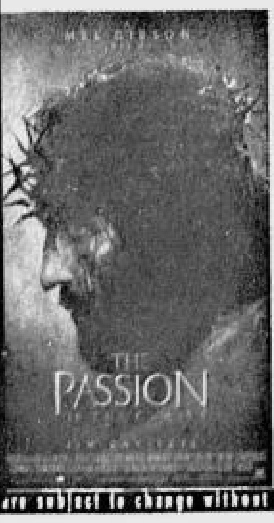

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SONG AP

Park, Song share lead

RANCHO MIRAGE, California—Grace Park used a flurry of birdies to put herself in position to win her first major title with a 5-under 67 that left her tied for the lead with 17-year-old Aree Song after three rounds of the Kraft Nabisco Championship.

Song's round of 69 wasn't quite as good as the one posted by Park, but it was remarkable enough for someone playing in just her fourth tournament as a pro. Even more impressive Saturday was everyone's teen sensation, 14-year-old Michelle Wie, who doesn't figure to cash a check herself for another four years or so.

Last group

Wie also shot a 69 and will begin play Sunday only two shots back in the second to the last group.

"Last year I really didn't know how well I could shoot or how bad I would shoot," said Wie, who finished tied for ninth last year. "This time I'm trying to win it or be in the top five at least."

Almost unnoticed on a day when youth was served was Annika Sorenstam, eight strokes back after a 69.

Jennifer Rosales of the Philippines skied to a 79 and was among the tailenders at 228. She trailed Dorothy Delasin by 10 strokes as the Fil-Am bet had another 71 for 218.

Park, the old lady of the leaders at the age of 25, birdied four holes in a row beginning at No. 7 on her way to a bogey-free round in a tournament she, too, used to play in as an amateur.

Pressure

The difference for Park is she never did very well in the Nabisco—at least until this week. Now she feels like she's ready to win a major title, and ready to prove herself under final-round pressure.

Park played in the same group as Wie, and took the opportunity to check out the impressive game of the long-hitting teen. That didn't stop her from concentrating on her own task at hand, which was to take advantage of benign conditions and move up the leaderboard.

She did just that, thanks to a string of birdies that began when she hit a punch 9-iron to the seventh hole and didn't end until she birdied the 10th from 4 feet.

Park couldn't help but be impressed by Wie, whose composure on the course was dramatically different than last year, when she played in the final group. AP

SPORTS

DUBAI WORLD CUP

Pleasantly Perfect beats Medaglia in $6-M race

SOLIS punches the air as Pleasantly Perfect crosses the finish line. REUTERS

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates—Richard Mandella was dubbed "King Richard" after winning a record four Breeders' Cup races five months ago. Add another title: "Sheik Richard."

The Hall of Fame trainer had his prayers answered in the desert Saturday when Pleasantly Perfect outdueled Medaglia d'Oro and won the $6-million Dubai World Cup—the richest race on earth.

"I didn't shut my eyes, but I did a lot of praying, I'll tell you that," Mandella said.

It was far from easy for a trainer who has been coming to this wealthy sheikdom since the World Cup began in 1996. Three times before, Mandella's horses finished second—Soul of the Matter in 1996, Siphon in 1997 and Malek in 1999.

But this time was different. When racing's top two older horses hooked up in a thrilling stretch run, it was Pleasantly Perfect who prevailed by three-quarters of a length.

Medaglia d'Oro, gallant in defeat, finished second yet again to Pleasantly Perfect. The last time was five months ago in the $4-million Breeders' Cup Classic.

"They make it worth your while," Mandella said, referring to the sheiks who created this $15.25-million, six-race program.

The win was worth $3.6 million for Gerald J. Ford's Diamond A Racing Corp., with the trainer customarily receiving 10 percent. The 6-year-old Pleasantly Perfect has now earned $6.7 million.

Even though betting is illegal in Dubai, an estimated 7,000 people attended the races at Nad al Sheba. The crowd was a mix of royalty in long Arab robes sipping soft drinks in the grandstands, people arriving in luxury cars and laborers sprawled picnic-style on the manicured lawns for a day at the races.

Fleetstreet Dancer set the early pace, with Medaglia d'Oro at his flank and Pleasantly Perfect in close pursuit heading into the turn of the 2-km race.

In the stretch, Medaglia d'Oro, with Jerry Bailey aboard, moved into the lead. But Alex Solis urged on Pleasantly Perfect, and the two went stride for stride until Mandella's horse pulled ahead in the final yards.

Victory Moon, winner of last year's UAE Derby, was third, nearly eight lengths behind Medaglia d'Oro. Grand Hombre, the hometown favorite owned by Sheik Mohammed's Godolphin Racing, was fourth in the 12-horse field, nearly 14 lengths behind the winner.

Mandella wasn't sure he would make it to Dubai after having to scratch Pleasantly Perfect from the Santa Anita Handicap earlier this month with a slight fever. *AP*

Empire King upset; jockey suspended

By Edwin Villanueva

EMPIRE King's winning run and torrid march to the Triple Crown screeched to a halt yesterday when he was upset in a regular race at the San Lazaro Leisure Park.

Far second choice Music Express did what other TC contenders had failed to accomplish against Empire King in his last seven outings as the 4-year-old bay colt won their Class 3, Division 3A race by a head in front of a stunned Sunday crowd.

Music Express, handled by Jesse Guce, thus ran away with the P125,000 winner's prize which many thought was already in the bag for Empire King.

Later, stewards suspended Empire King's regular rider, Jeffrey Ladiana, for 12 racing weeks "for not giving his mount the full opportunity to run."

Empire King, last year's juvenile champion who beat another leading TC candidate, Don Paolo, prior to yesterday's setback, appeared headed for another easy win but Music Express suddenly swung into contention when they straightened out for home.

Sired by Conquistarose out of Opening Night, Music Express caught Empire King (Perfect Halo-Carta Nueve) in the last few strides to the wire to score the day's biggest reversal.

Music Express is owned by former racing commissioner Eduardo Galang, also the owner of 1986 Presidential Gold Cup champion Music Machine.

Overshadowed by Music Express' stirring feat were the victories of Air Force One, Union Square and Absolute Charmer in the featured events.

Air Force One topped the second leg of the Nourish the Children Stakes, while Union Square and Absolute Charmer ruled the Gawad Kalinga Foundation Cup races.

Antonio Jacob partnered Air Force One, who outkicked Flying Jordan down the stretch; Jeffril Zarate guided Union Square to a wire-to-wire win over top choice Bulakeña, while Fernando Raquel Jr. engineered Absolute Charmer's come-from-behind triumph.

Ottke defends WBA, IBF super middle titles, then calls it quits

MAGDEBURG, Germany—Sven Ottke finished his career unbeaten on Saturday, winning a lopsided decision over Swedish challenger Armand Kranjc to defend his WBA and IBF super middleweight titles.

After his dominating performance against Kranjc, one of Ottke's best, the 36-year-old German surprised even his manager with his announcement he was retiring.

"If you saw his performance today, it's sad, but it was his dream and mine for him to finish unbeaten," said Uli Wegner, who has trained him since his amateur days.

Ottke, 34-0 with six knockouts, defended his IBF crown for the 21st time and the WBA belt for the fourth time, charging out from the first round against Kranjc and throwing flurries of punches that landed.

The Swedish former WBO middleweight champion may not have won one round in a bout ruled 120-110, 120-108 and 119-109 by the judges.

"I've never seen Sven throw this many punches," said Markus Beyer, the WBC middleweight champion who fights under the same promoter. *AP*

PAFFEN SPORT

OTTKE (right) lands a punch on Kranjc. REUTERS

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Player dies of sudden death syndrome

DURBAN, South Africa—Ireland under-19 international John McCall, who died after collapsing on the field during a world championship match, likely died of "sudden death syndrome," a newspaper reported Sunday.

"The common cause is a severe heart attack, although it could also have been cerebral—as a result of a brain vessel bursting," the Sunday Times weekly newspaper reported Dr. Ismail Jakoet as saying.

"We call it sudden death syndrome. That's certainly our provisional diagnosis," Jakoet, general manager of medical affairs at the South Africa Rugby Football Union, said.

Jakoet however said an autopsy had not yet been conducted but the likely cause of his death Saturday was a heart attack.

According to the Sunday Times, Italian team doctor Corrado D'Antimo said the Durban heat may have played a factor in the player's death. The match started in the early afternoon, and the temperature was about 26 degrees Celsius (78 Fahrenheit).

The 18-year-old flanker died on the opening day of the U19 World Championship in a match against New Zealand after collapsing during the first half at Durban's Absa Stadium. The International Rugby Board said the exact cause of death had not yet been determined.

The governing body of Irish rugby said McCall was injured during the match and taken to a hospital where he died.

The South Africa Rugby Football Union and the IRB "have pledged their full support and offer their deepest sympathies to the player's family as well as the Irish under 19 team and management," the rugby board said in a joint statement issued late Saturday night. *AP*

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Gov't urged to open economy to foreigners

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE GOVERNMENT has been urged to liberalize its so-called "negative list" of sectors closed to foreign investors, warning that the current investment policy was keeping the country at the tailend of global competition.

The call was made by David Fulton, commercial counselor at the US Embassy in Manila, in a written feedback to the US Agency for International Development, which is reviewing the country's investment climate.

Fulton said the country's negative list was "far too broad and severely restricts job-creating foreign investment in many industry sectors."

"The Philippines needs a sweeping overhaul of its negative list—not just tinkering with it around the edges—to enable it to compete for foreign direct investment," Fulton stressed in a March 18 letter to the USAID.

Among the industries in the Philippines' negative list are retail trade enterprises with paid-up capital of less than $2,500; cooperatives; private security agencies; small-scale mining; use of marine resources in waters, territorial sea and exclusive economic zone; ownership, operation and management of cockpits; manufacture, repair, stockpiling and/or distribution of nuclear weapons; manufacture, repair, stockpiling and/or distribution of biological, chemical and radiological weapons and anti-personal mines, and manufacture of firecrackers and other pyrotechnic devices.

Likewise closed to foreigners are the following: mass media, engineering, aeronautics, agriculture chemicals, civil and electrical engineering, electronics and communications, geodetic, mechanical or metallurgical professionals, mining, naval architecture and marine sanitary medicine and allied professions, medicine, medical technology, dentistry, midwifery, nursing, nutrition, dietetics, optometry, pharmacy, physical and occupational therapy, radiologic and x-ray technology, veterinary medicine, accountancy, criminology customs brokerage, environmental planning, forestry, geology, interior design, law, librarianship, marine deck officership, master plumbing, sugar technology, social work, teaching and fisheries.

"Neighboring countries, including Thailand and Singapore, have opened their doors to foreign investment and reaped substantial economic gains as a result," Fulton said.

"In large part, because of an influx of foreign capital, Thailand and Singapore have consistently outpaced the Philippines," he said.

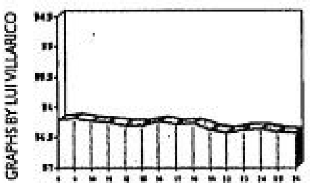
Fulton noted that even war-torn Iraq had a more "welcoming" investment code than the Philippines.

He noted that Iraq allowed 100-percent foreign ownership and management of Iraqi business entities except in natural re-

GOV'T/B6

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



FEBRUARY MARCH

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P 56.425 = $ 1

As of 5 p.m., March 26, 2004

¥ 105.69 = $ 1

As of 5 p.m., March 26, 2004

GOLD: $416.30-416.80

per ounce Hong Kong, March 24, 2004

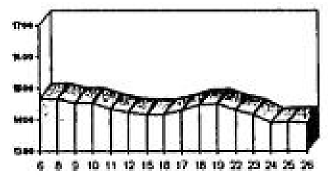
INTEREST RATES

March 26, 2004-MART1 Rates Benchmark Interest Rates	MART1 26-Mar-04	MART1 25-Mar-04
1 Month	7.7517	7.7533
3 Months	8.19	8.1817
6 Months	9.1397	9.153
1 Year	9.945	9.9817
2 Years	10.6783	10.73
3 Years	11.4982	11.5589
4 Years	11.7733	11.805
5 Years	12.1933	12.2017
7 Years	12.47	12.5067
10 Years	12.6554	12.6769
20 Years	12.9982	13.0643
25 Years	13.2875	13.3518

SOURCE: MART/BLOOMBERG

STOCK MARKET

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B6)

Slow trading seen

STOCK analysts still see the stock market coasting slowly this week in the absence of earth-shaking incentives to buy listed shares.

Grace Cerdenia of online brokerage 2TradeAsia said she saw possible technical relief rallies specially after several blue chips were bruised by the recent sellout in the market.

"Attention will continue to stay selective, possibly with in-depth focus on telecom, consumer plays and energy shares," she said of the outlook for this week.

The benchmark Philippine Stock Exchange composite index fell 59.9 points or 4.13 percent to 1,390.92 last week, with sentiment also affected by by the beating global markets received.

The jitters were compounded by doubts on whether the government could meet its budget deficit target in the first quarter after the gap widened between revenues and expenditures last week.

The peso's performance further dampened sentiment as it weakened to 56.425 against the dollar by the end of last week on strong corporate demand.

An analyst from a foreign brokerage said the market might continue to watch corporate earnings reports from firms like Benpres Holdings, First Philippine Holdings and SM Prime Holdings while also keeping its ears glued for first-quarter indicators from listed firms.

"Investors took their cue from the losses in US markets and the weak peso," BPI Trade wrote in its weekly report.

It added that investors might fish for bargains since the market was already touching very low price levels. With such flimsy incentives to buy stocks, analysts said investors would continue to be cautious given the ongoing political uncertainties.

"Barring another unsettling geopolitical or political event, the next impetus for the stock market is likely to be in April, when the earnings reporting period would start. At the moment, the market isn't ready to spike up after the steep losses in the past two weeks. There is no shortage of things to worry about, thus there is the need for stocks to

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Turning today's idealists into tomorrow's leaders

CORPORATE CITIZEN

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

MORE and more youth activists, even the most rabid, tend to lose their idealism as soon as they enter the "real world."

What is more tragic is that most of these young people are stripped of the belief that they can make a better world even before they leave the university or college.

The Ayala group of companies is now trying to stem this tide of cynicism through its Ayala Young Leaders Conference, one of its major social development projects that focus on the youth.

It was launched in 1998 under the program, "Shaping Tomorrow's Leaders."

The project had its roots in a discussion on how to nurture a new breed of leaders with the proper values and the heart to build a better Philippines.

For the Ayala group, the best way to do this is to capture them while they are still young and open to big, bright ideas.

PARTICIPANTS of the recently held Ayala Young Leaders Conference flank former President Corazon Aquino and executives of the Ayala group of companies in a group shot taken at the close of the event.

Most promising

The idea behind the conference is to gather the most promising student leaders from all over the Philippines for a three-day live-in conference designed to hone their leadership skills and potential.

They sit through a series of workshops and discussions with leaders they could look up to, and experts who would help them hone their leadership skills.

Former President Corazon C. Aquino was the keynote speaker in this year's conference held in February.

She talked of how the youth can keep the spirit of Edsa alive by being leaders in their own towns and cities.

Other speakers were Gov. Teodoro Baguilat Jr. of Ifugao, former Health Secretary Alfredo Bengzon, Professor Randy David, Danny Javier of Pidro Communications, CNN Jakarta bureau chief Maria Ressa and Peggy Dulany, chairperson of Synergos Institute.

Philosophy of service

This investment in the youth is a concrete expression of the Ayala group's commitment to national development.

AYLC is built around the spirit of servant leadership, a model that puts the philosophy of service to the practice of leadership. With this philosophy as a guide, AYLC aims to strengthen the youth's commitment to integrity and principled leadership, foster their nationalism and idealism and encourage them to be stewards of the country's future.

Student leaders go through a rigorous selection system that considers not only their academic excellence but also their leadership position and accomplishments. Candidates are flown to Manila for panel interviews with senior executives of the Ayala group who evaluate them on emotional maturity, thinking skills, self-confidence, and interpersonal and communication skills.

For many of the delegates, it is their first time to ride an airplane or go to Manila and some went away very thankful for the experience of dealing with top executives even if they don't make it to the actual conference.

Fervor

Ayala Corp. CEO Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala, however, said that it was not only the youth leaders who benefited from the conference.

Zobel said an "unplanned" benefit from the exercise was the way the different officers of the Ayala group lend their time and effort to interact with the young leaders, to infect themselves with their enthusiasm and fervor.

He said these CEOs and top officials did not set aside a portion of their time because they were required to do so, but because they found it fulfilling to be surrounded with young leaders who have not lost that fire in their belly and believe that they can make a difference.

"They always use the word hope, and that is good," Zobel said. "Often they come up to me and say thanks for giving them the opportunity to interview and just be with these young leaders. They said that they feel good again."

Catalyst for change

For many of these CEOs, being with the young leaders and spending a few hours with them during the conference in a way fanned the dying em-

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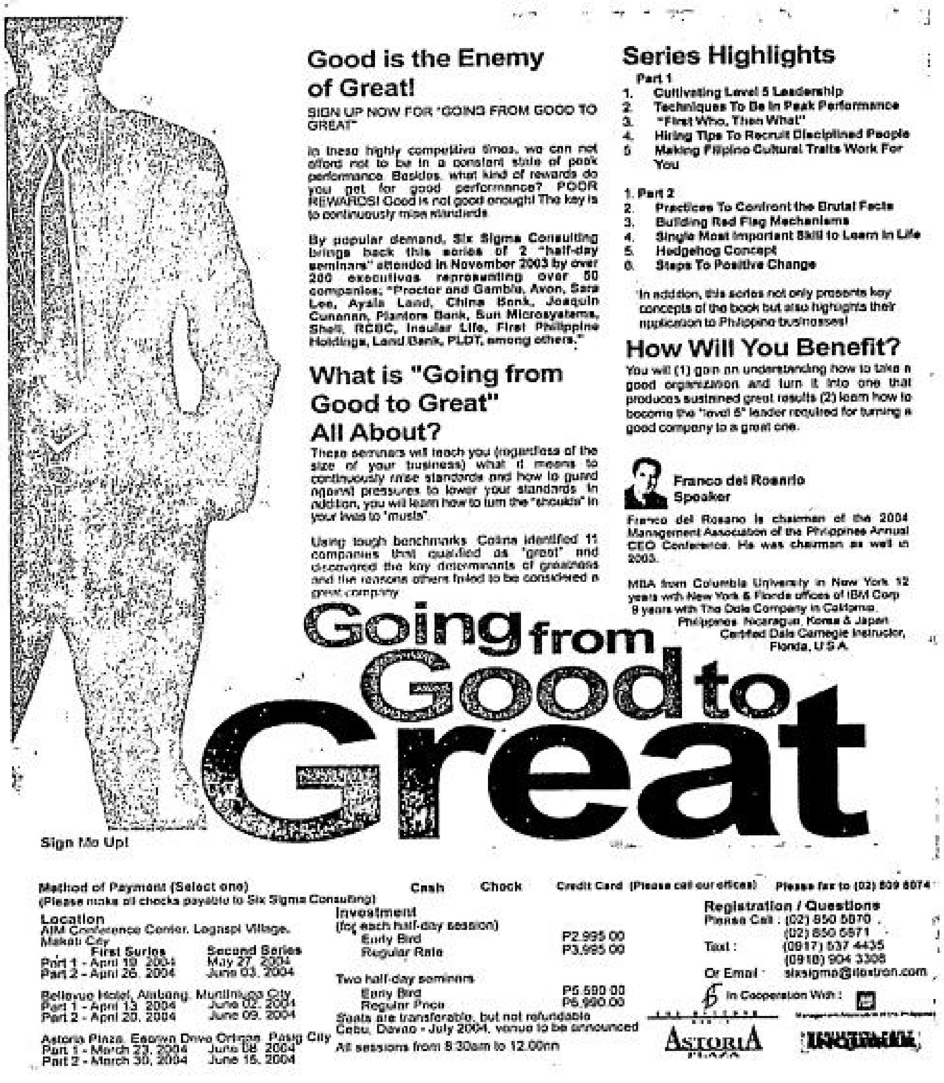

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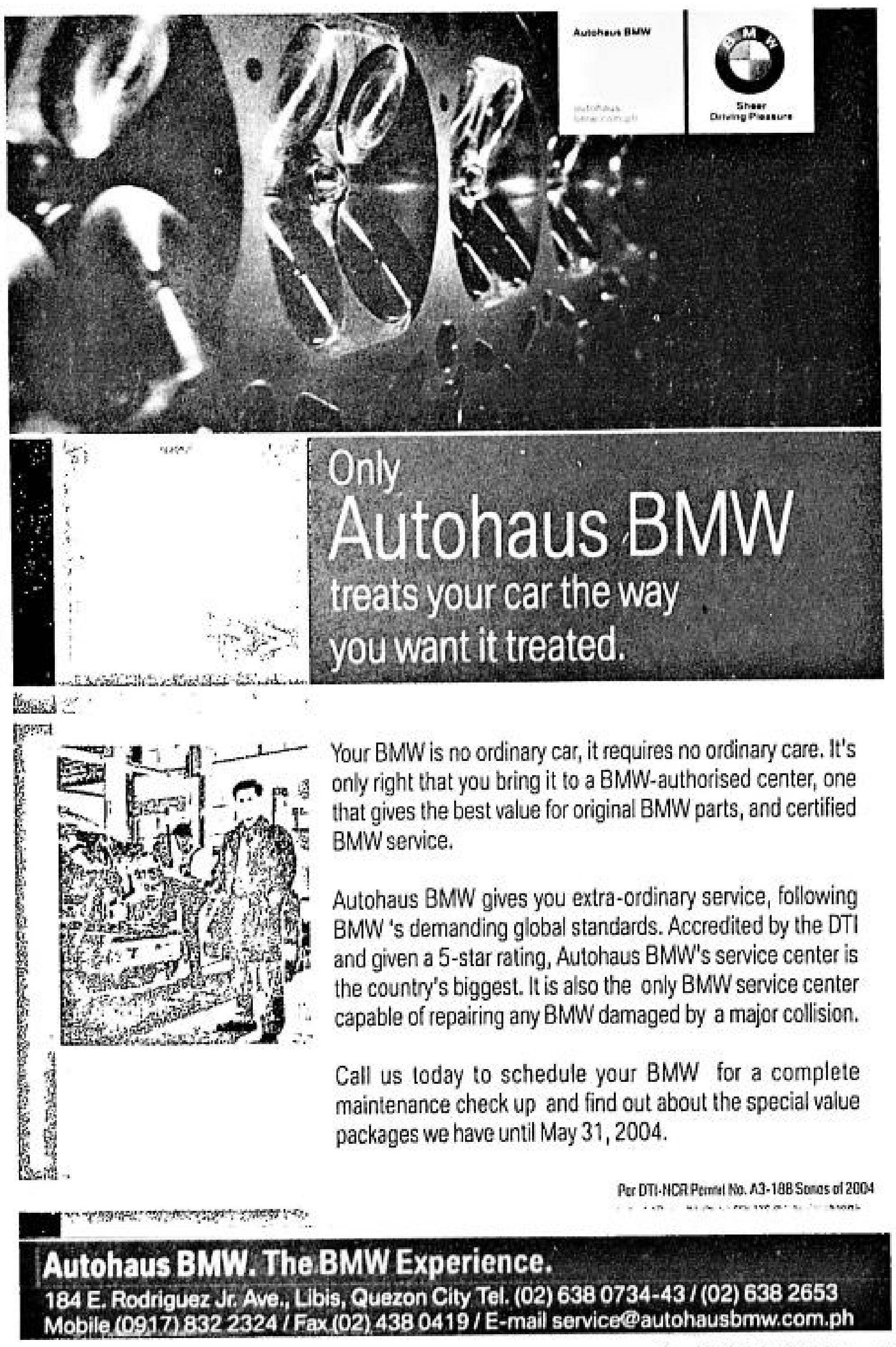

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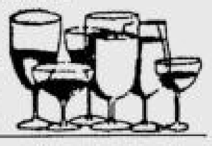

EUSEBIO "Yosi" Tanco may now only be a nominee chair of port operator Asian Terminals but it seems the businessman has bounced back from the All Asia Capital debacle and assorted misfortunes that befell him during the Erap years.

After recently acquiring the minority stake of the College Assurance Plan in Bank of Commerce through his STI computer school chain, Tanco is said to be leading a group that is bailing out the Fil-Estate Group of developer Robert Sobrepeña.

According to the banking grapevine, Tanco's group is pumping in P700 million into the Fil-Estate Group in exchange for, this is still unconfirmed, the 28.5-percent stake of Fil Estate Corp. in Metro Rail Transit, the light rail system along Epifanio delos Santos Ave.

Because of its financial fix, the Sobrepeña-led MRT consortium still has failed to provide a 5,000-square-meter office building for the Department of Transportation and Communication as stipulated under the revised year 2000 build-lease-transfer agreement for the Edsa rail system.

$67-M question

THE question as to whether CalPERS will pull out its reported $67-million (over P3.2 billion) investments in the local stock exchange still hangs, despite last week's RP delegation meeting with no less than the chair of the California Public Employees' Retirement System, Rob Feckner himself.

The Philippine team of Assistant Finance Secretary Jeremias Paul, Philippine embassy political affairs minister Lourdes Yparraguirre, and corporate lawyer Francis Lim had originally been slated to meet only with Wilshire Associates, CalPERS' research consultants, until Feckner decided to sit in.

According to the grapevine, the Thursday meeting, held at the Marriott Hotel in Napa Valley, had been pleasant, unlike the first meeting with the CalPERS board.

What shocked the Philippine team, according to the same grapevine, was the revelation from Wilshire that some of their negative reports about the Philippines came from briefings given by our very own Makati Business Club to Wilshire research subcontractors.

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Heard through the grapevine

SOCIALITE Diana Jeanne Lopez has lost her second appeal with the Supreme Court questioning her ejectment from the Dasmariñas Village house she had been staying in since 1980 until her unceremonious removal sometime late 2002.

Ms Lopez had all along thought that the Paraiso Street residence, originally acquired from Don Enrique Zobel, had been given to her as a gift only to find out two decades later that, sin verguenza!, the property had never been transferred under her name as she had been made to believe.

(Email: cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com or cocktales_pdi@hotmail.com.)

Ayala seen to pursue public offering of water utility unit

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

THE AYALA Group will pursue the public offering of shares of Manila Water Co. Inc.

Ayala Corp. president Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala II said the group was still keeping its options open on whether to sell new shares or the stocks it recently acquired.

While there was no clear indication when the public offering might take place, officials of MWC are targetting to raise an estimated P5 billion from a possible public offering by next year.

The Ayala Group and its partner earlier invested P500 million in stocks of MWC to boost the East Zone water distributor's capital.

Ayala Corp., its partner United Utilities Pacific Holdings BV and investment company BPI Capital Corp., subscribed to a total of P500 million worth of redeemable preferred shares.

Preferred shareholders get the first crack at a portion of the company's retained earnings or dividends before these are paid out to common shareholders.

Of the P500-million subscription, Ayala Corp. accounted for P310 million, United Capital subscribed to P120.69 million and BPI Capital, P68.97 million. The Ayala group earlier bought shares of Bechtel Utilities Inc. in MWC, increasing its stake in the water utility to 60 percent.

The Ayala group's other partner, United Utilities, bought 2 percent of Bechtel's shares, beefing up its equity to 18.2 percent. The employees group, on the other hand, increased its stake from 6 to 7 percent while Japan's Mitsubishi Corp. maintained its 10-percent equity.

MWC, which supplies water to half or some 5 million customers in Metro Manila, accounts for 10 percent of the group's income.

The Ayala-led water company spent P1.8 billion in capital expenditures last year to increase its coverage area and reduce systems losses.

Part of MWC's business expansion strategy in the next few years is to lay out a minimum of 885 kilometers of new pipeline. These will cover areas further east of the concession that include parts of Taguig, Antipolo and other areas in Rizal province.

The company ended 2003 with a total of 515,000 water service connections, 10 percent higher than in 2002.

MWC generated P3.6 billion in revenues in 2003 and a net income of P1.2 billion, or double the previous year's level. These were boosted by increased tariff rates and improved billed volumes.

It set asides P3-P4 billion a year in capital expenditure for expansion and network improvement.

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Globe Telecom seen getting rating upgrade

By Clarissa S. Batino

GLOBE Telecom Inc. is the only Philippine company that may get a credit rating or outlook upgrade from Standard & Poor's this year, according to a recent report of the New York-based rating agency.

Globe, the second-biggest telecom firm in the country, is one of the 243 rated companies and sovereigns worldwide that S&P named as potential candidates for an upgrade.

A rating or outlook upgrade tends to bring down the cost of the rated firm's borrowing as it indicated less risks, giving investors less reason to demand a higher return for their placements.

"A global total of 243 entities appeared most likely to benefit from potential upgrades across all rating designations from 'AA+' to 'B-'. These entities were listed either with a CreditWatch with positive implications or with a Positive Outlook," said the March 17 report of S&P's Global Fixed Income Research.

One of Globe's previous owners, Deutsche Telekom AG, also made it to S&P's list of potential upgrades. Deutsche Telecom has a BBB-plus rating with S&P. It sold its 24.8-percent stake in Globe to the Filipino and Singaporean owners.

S&P had given Globe a BB rating with a stable outlook, at par with the country's credit rating and outlook. The Philippines was not in the list of nine sovereigns poised for an upgrade.

The Ayala-controlled company as well as Deutsche Telecom could be due for an outlook or even a rating upgrade as indicated by the S&P report that listed both as among the more than 200 companies with either a positive outlook or a positive CreditWatch.

"Entities that bear either a Positive Outlook or a CreditWatch listing with positive implications are a good leading indicator of actual upgrades," said the S&P report.

S&P's CreditWatch indicates the potential direction of a credit rating change in the near term, with results coming out within a 90-day period while a rating outlook indicates a possible rating change within six months to a year.

A BB rating is classified as speculative grade, a rating usually given to borrowers from emerging economies like the Philippines.

Globe was last rated by S&P for its dollar bond issues worth $220 million sold in November 2001 and maturing in 2012 and $200 million sold in April 2002 and falling due in 2009.

In January, however, Moody's Investors Service downgraded the outlook on Globe's Ba2 rating to negative from positive. The rating agency clarified, however, that the outlook adjustment was in line with the negative outlook given to the Philippines' credit.

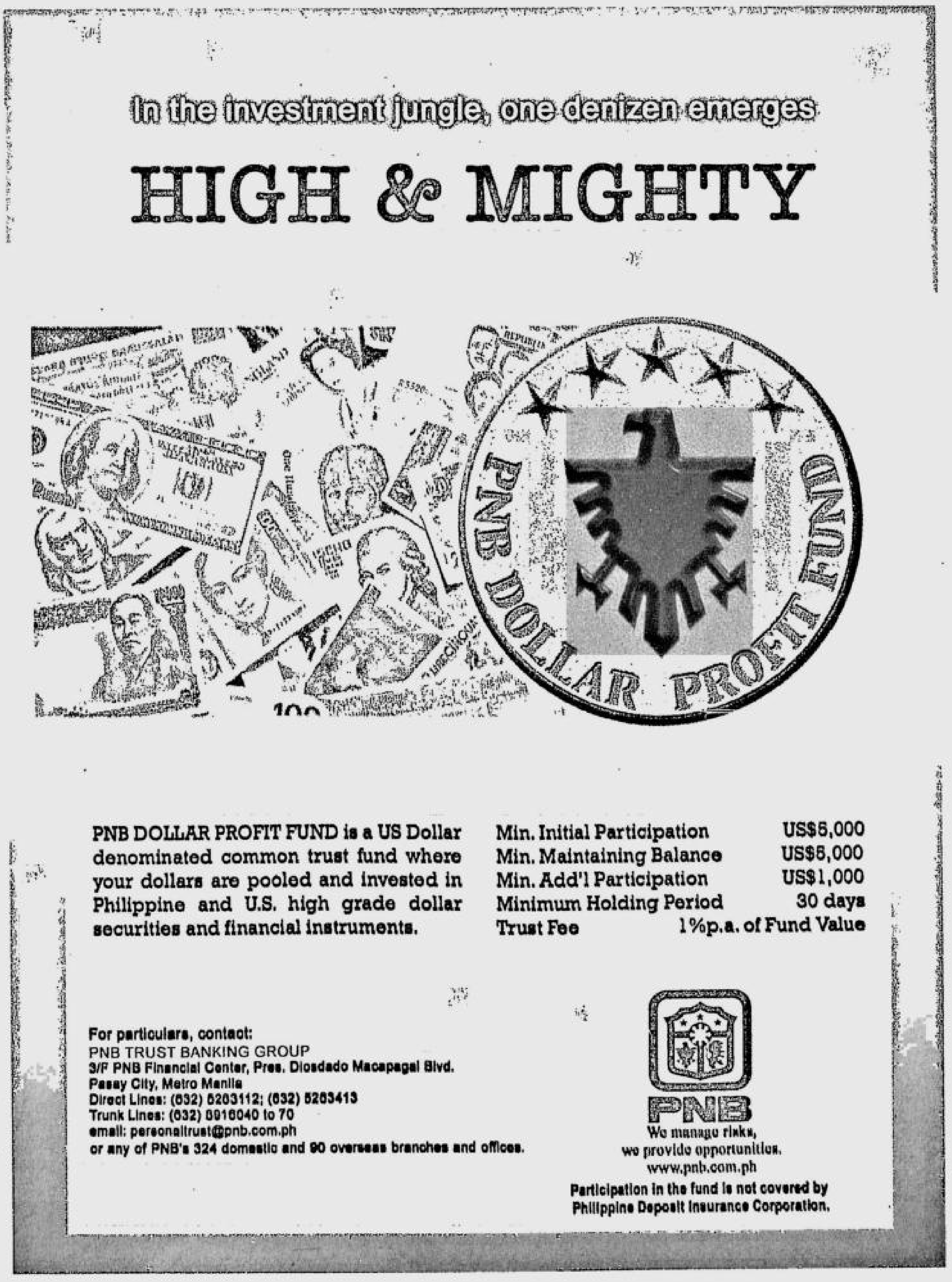
Australian-RP companies set meeting for investors

PROJECT Realty Group (PRG) Pty. Ltd., a property investment specialist based in Sydney, and its local subsidiary, PRG Realty (Phils.) Inc., are now promoting Australia as an alternative place for business and investment.

This is a new thrust for the Sydney realty specialist, which has been engaged in selling Philippine properties in Australia through its local marketing agencies.

Ed Tarriela, PRG (Phils.) director and managing partner of the law firm Tarriela Tagao & Ona, announced that a presentation would be made about the investment thrust at the Manila Polo Club tomorrow. Among the topics to be discussed are "Property Investment Options," "Property Development Opportunities," "Foreign Investments," and "Tax Implications and Legalities of Investment."

Officers of the two firms have held a series of consultations regarding the investment programs for Australian and Philippine properties. A recent meeting witnessed the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement between the firms by Tarriela; Collin Curran, CEO of PRG Australia; Merlin Curran, managing director of PRG Australia; Manuel Tayas, director of PRG (Phils.) and former Philippine Service Trade Commissioner to Australia; Ted Michael Tarriela, overall sales manager of PRG (Phils.), and Cesar Bigornia, marketing director of PRG Australia.



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Banks' foreign currency deposits reach $13.9B

By Doris C. Dumlao

WHILE the peso was tumbling to record lows, foreign currencies deposited with the Philippine banking system hit a historic high of $13.9 billion as of March 20.

BSP Deputy Governor Alberto Reyes said the level represented an increase of almost $1 billion from $12.77 billion in end-March last year.

"The deposit build-up came largely from export earnings and remittances from overseas Filipino workers," Reyes said.

He said deposits in the banks' foreign currency deposit units (FCDUs) were stable. This, he said, was because 95 percent of the amount consisted of deposits of residents.

"Also, most of the deposits are invested in ROP (Republic of the Philippines sovereign) bonds," Reyes said.

The country's gross international reserves fell to $15.76 billion as of end-February from $16.08 billion in January due to public sector debt servicing.

FCDUs, considered as the country's secondary layer of foreign exchange reserves, historically attract more deposits whenever the peso is on a free-fall against the US dollar. People and enterprises earning dollars opt to park their funds in FCDUs—instead of immediately converting into pesos—in anticipation of a higher exchange rate.

The build-up of FCDU deposits, however, does not necessarily translate to increased FCDU lending. Borrowers themselves, heeding lessons from the Asian currency turmoil, are averse to dollar loans these days due to the huge foreign exchange risks.

FCDU deposits have been rising amid suspicions that dollar hoarders were abusing the system.

The BSP earlier approved new circulars to tighten its monitoring of banks' sale of dollars for non-trade purposes and the documentation of letters of credits (L/Cs) used to justify trade-related dollar purchases.

If banks will sell foreign exchange other than for trade purposes, they are prohibited from crediting these to their FCDU accounts.

All I want are equal rights with women

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Honesto C. General

IN a recent public demonstration (dutifully covered by national TV, of course), a group of activist nongovernmental organizations was on the bullhorn to press for more women rights. A few nights later, I caught on a TV talk show a bunch of women, all quite articulate, well coifed and supremely confident, discussing the problem of battered women. Then, after hearing Mass at Ateneo Rockwell, I saw a streamer for some kind of workshop, ominously called "Women: A Unifying Force for Peace and Governance."

Now, hold on a minute, ladies. I am for women's rights, a hundred and one percent. After all, this is Christian Philippines in the 21st century. And throughout history, the Filipino woman has been a pillar of strength of the family. After World War II, she emerged from the comforts of home to carve out a career for herself. The Philippines has never been the same since then.

Take the life insurance industry. When I joined Insular Life in 1951, there was only one lady section chief. Today, most of the actuaries and top executives, not to mention the rank and file employees, are women. There was only one lady agency manager. Today, 80 percent of the agents are women. The other life insurance companies are proud of similar assets.

There are fewer women in the non-life industry, but the men are slowly losing ground. Even insurance brokerage is no longer the exclusive activity of the Filipino male. The field sales assistants who visit my office asking for more and more business, not only know what they are talking about, but they are all nice-looking young ladies.

The proliferation of women in the production floor and the executive suite is not only the result of the need for a family to have two sources of income. It is also the direct result of the fact that women are more educated than ever before. You can go to the best schools and you see droves of women taking up courses that used to be reserved for men.

The Filipino woman is one of the country's most valuable assets (I would not go so far as to say she is the most valuable). But she should not forget how fortunate she is. If she were in Afghanistan under the Taliban, she could not walk outside the house unless fully covered and accompanied by a male relative. If she were at a dinner in a Singapore, her husband would be served first (which is not such a bad idea, come to think of it).

Watching the activist women on the bullhorn or on a TV talk show or in a seminar, I cannot help but wonder whether they could cook *caldereta* or *sinigang*. If, all of a sudden, an unexpected visitor pops in before a meal, can she quickly toss a salad, scramble eggs, whip an omelet, or simply fry *galunggong*? If a button snaps off her dress, can she sew it back on herself? Can she wield a flat-iron?

When women complain about battered wives, how about battered husbands? The battered wife can scream and sue, but the battered husband with a black eye meekly tells everyone he ran into a doorknob.

When women cry for more rights, my answer is, they already have more rights than men. And, as a red-blooded Filipino male, all I want are equal rights with women. That is not much to ask, is it?

PARP Update: The Philippine Association of Retired Persons (PARP) has appointed Domingo Basilio Jr., regional coordinator for Eastern Visayas. The Tacloban chapter has new officers: president Alejandro Rostata Sr., vice president Macario Segui, secretary Bertencia Quilaga, treasurer Eufracia Baquiano, auditor Franco Baguna, PIO Corazon Esporas, directors Ignacio Bayona, Rodrigo Aquiban Jr., Damaso de la Cruz, Lucia Homerez, Placida Marcelita. More power, everyone!

NEA expected to post P145M in savings

THE NATIONAL Electrification Administration (NEA) expects to generate savings of some P145.32 million this year following the restructuring of the agency, which was undertaken in line with the mandate of the Electric Power Industry Reform Act or Republic Act No. 9136.

This was disclosed by NEA Administrator Edith Bueno who said that the bulk of the savings would come from lower manpower expenditure in view of the reduction in the agency's workforce from 800 to about 400.

The restructuring of NEA was completed late last year following two years of consultation with NEA employees. Bueno said the new organizational design "is the product of a highly participative consensus-building process and was accepted by the agency's then existing 17 employee associations."

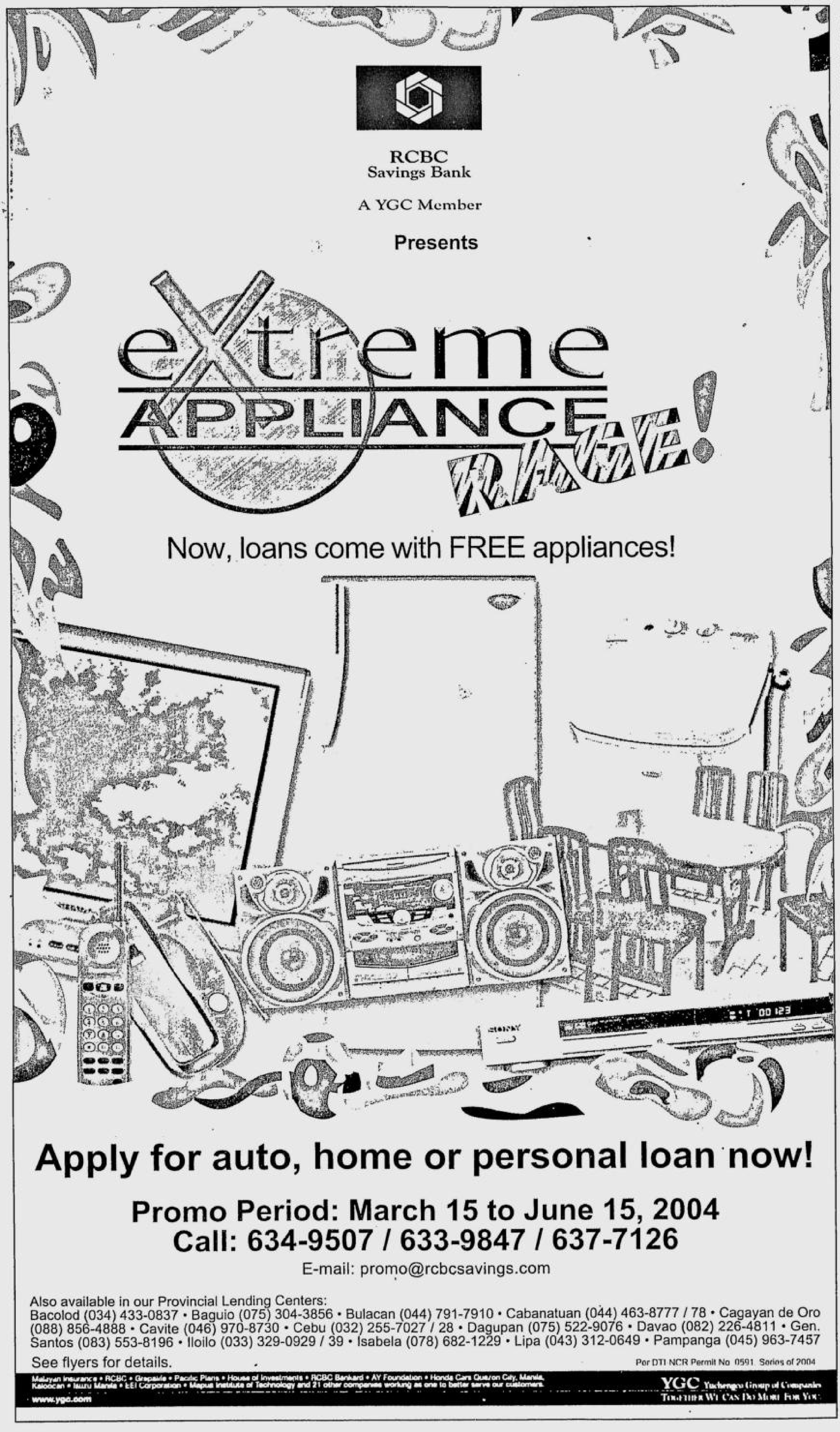
Bueno said the new NEA structure "is much smaller now since there is less need to hand-hold the rural electric cooperatives which are our primary clientele." The sector has achieved major successes in the bid to rehabilitate moribund electric cooperatives.

The agency is currently staffed 100 percent by NEA employees who resigned or retired under the old structure and who were re-hired under the new organizational design.

Bueno said the restructured agency would now focus on the electrification of some 760 barangays and sitios all over the country, the supervision of the performance improvement program for rural electric cooperatives and the rehabilitation efficiency plan.

NEA has allocated some P450 million for the electrification of barangays and sitios.

Bueno also reported that of the country's 119 rural electric coops, more close to 80 are considered excellently performing and less than 20 still continue to require assistance for their rehabilitation.



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Monopolies and the economy

NO FREE LUNCH

Cielito F. Habito

AFTER obtaining a reversal of an earlier US court decision for Microsoft Corp. to break up into several companies some years back, the company now finds itself being slapped with a fine by the European Union that is far from peanuts, amounting to about $600 million. Microsoft's sin? Alleged unfair trade practices that are seen to enhance its monopolistic position in the computer software market. I do not intend to delve into the complexities of the Microsoft case here, but simply wanted to call attention to the strong legal mechanisms currently in place in the US and Europe to deal with monopolies—a mechanism that has yet to be seriously considered by our own lawmakers in Congress.

Monopolies in our midst

One of the first moves of the Ramos administration upon assumption into office in 1992 was to address monopolies and cartels in key sectors of the Philippine economy. Telecommunications, domestic aviation and shipping were among the first targets, and the positive results were quite evident. Since the opening up of telecommunications to greater competition, this services subsector has consistently been the most rapidly growing industry in our economy, consistently posting double-digit growth (more than 13 percent in 2003). The increased choices in domestic airline services has kept costs lower than what they could have been, and the quality and availability of domestic passenger shipping services had dramatically improved. In any case, consumer choices had also widened, and more choices are always preferable to having none.

But other less obvious monopolies (as well as monopsonies, i.e. single-buyer situations) and cartels (oligopolists colluding to behave like a monopoly) have remained. At one point, Malacañang had even attempted, through President Estrada's infamous EO 59, to mandate a monopoly in port handling services throughout the country. Until recently, the National Food Authority has had the monopoly of importing rice into the country. But the more insidious monopolies are those affecting small Filipino farmers, particularly in the marketing of farm products. The lack of choices on their part has long prevented them from obtaining a fair share of the final selling prices of their produce. Thus, small farmers have continued to be poor, while agricultural traders and processors are the ones getting rich out of our farmers' sweat.

What's wrong with monopolies?

The problem with monopolies, from consumers' point of view, is that we end up with higher prices and more restricted supplies of the product than would prevail under a competitive market. The textbooks tell us that a competitive firm cannot dictate its price and must take the market-determined price as given. Being small relative to the entire market, it could thus sell as much as it could at the given price, and will settle at the output that would give it maximum profit at the market price.

For the monopolist, there is a unique price-quantity combination that would give maximum profits. As a rule, the monopolist's best price will be higher than what would result if there was competition in the industry. And the profit-maximizing quantity will be less than what a competitive industry would settle at. Once the monopoly firm arrives at that optimum output, it has no incentive to further sell more of its product.

It was no surprise, then, that in the days when PLDT was our only choice for telephone services, it took years to get a phone line after applying for one. I like to tell my students of how I applied for a phone line for my home in Los Baños in 1984, soon after returning from my post-graduate studies abroad. It was not until almost six years later that we finally got our telephone. And that was because I was already an assistant director-general at Neda and had pleaded with a PLDT executive I met in a meeting that I needed to be within reach of my boss, and of the President given my new job in government. After waiting almost six years, I got my phone line two days after that chance encounter with a PLDT official. It had been possible to give me my line all along—but the firm simply was not inclined to give it all those years. That, after all, was profit-maximizing behavior, and for an economist like me, was understandable—but also extremely exasperating. Multiply that experience millions of times, and you'd see how we could have still been today if we had not opened up the sector to more competition.

Good monopolies

Still, there are exceptional cases when we are all better off having a monopoly. This happens when it is cheaper to provide the good or the service if there is only one producer, due to economies of scale. This is the case with public utilities like the local power utility company. Cities or towns do not permit more than one electric power company to provide the service because it would cost more to produce and sell a kilowatt-hour of power if the market was split up and each firm had to operate at a lower scale. The same holds for the water utilities, and even telecommunications services at a local level. Just imagine of there had to be two or three separate sets of power distribution lines or water pipelines traversing a municipality. It would not only be too costly, it would also be rather messy! That is why these cases are called natural monopolies.

What must be done in these cases is for the government to exercise direct regulation of the natural monopoly to prevent it from maximizing profits at the expense of consumers. That is why we have the ERC and the MWSS, to ensure that Meralco, Maynilad and Manila Water do not take advantage of their monopoly powers at the public's expense.

Need for competition policy

It must therefore be government policy to promote greater competition in the productive sectors of the economy. The United States and Europe have strong legal frameworks that prohibit monopoly and unfair trade practices that would lead to monopoly powers. A similar legal framework has been long overdue in the Philippines. Discussions and research have been going on for the past several years about a more formal competition policy, including a more unified institutional mechanism to enforce anti-trust rules. I would like to see the monopolistic elements in the farm trading sector become part of the purview of such an institution, when we finally get around to legislating it. We hope the forthcoming 13th Congress will be up to the challenge.

Comments welcome at chabito@ateneo.edu

Gov't considers $100-M loan

By Michelle V. Remo

THE GOVERNMENT is considering tapping the foreign market for an additional $100-million borrowing to meet its expenditure requirements for the year.

Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong told reporters the $100-million borrowing would be needed to complete the government's financing requirement of $1.8 billion for the whole year.

Amatong, however, said the government was not desperate to raise the additional money immediately as its cash position still remained healthy. She earlier shrugged off speculation that the government was badly in need of cash after it was forced to accept high bids for its offering of treasury bills and bonds.

"Our borrowing policy will remain to be opportunistic," she said, explaining that the government would only borrow at the right cost and at the right time when there was more stability and when the market would not have

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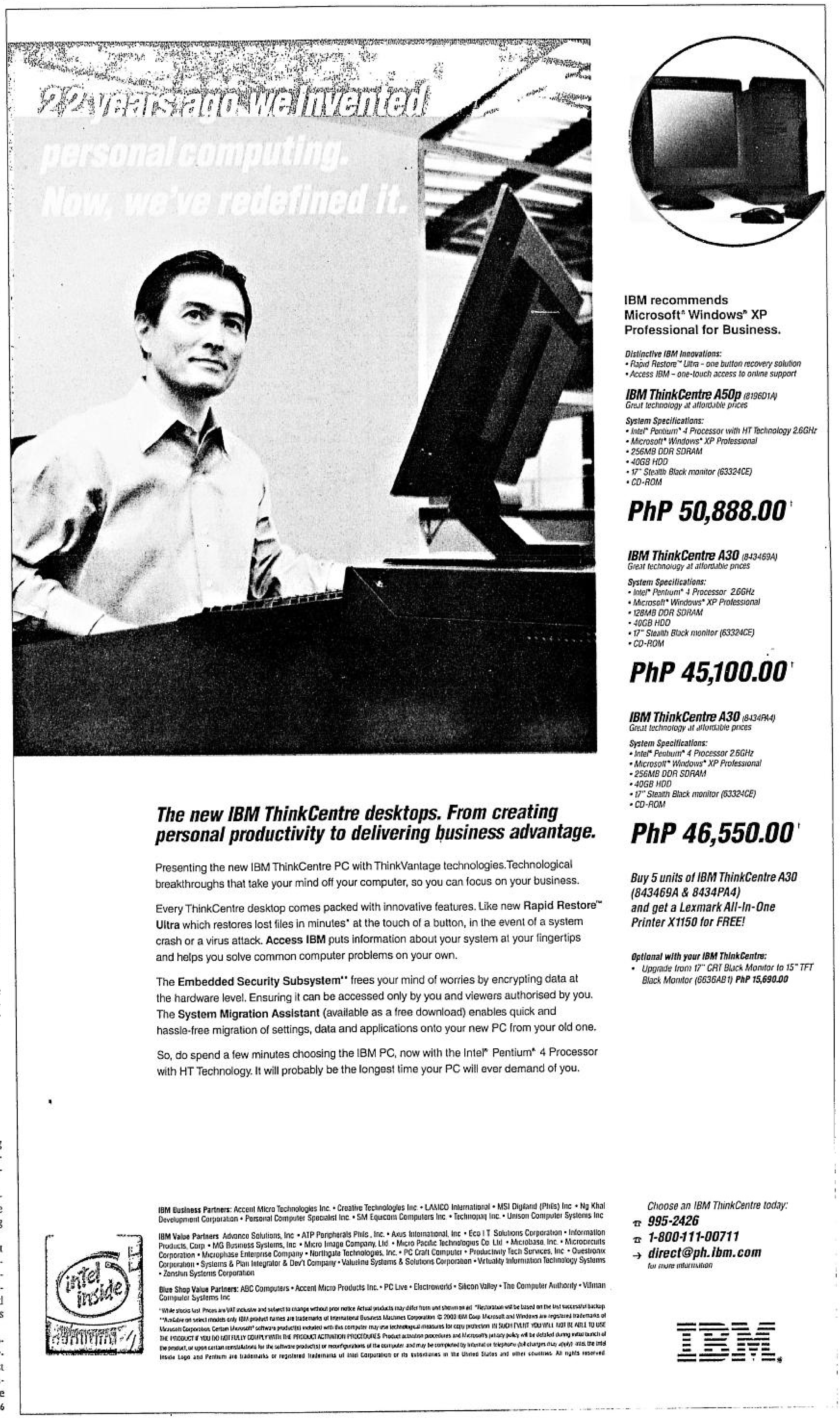
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PLDT profit seen exceeding ₱18B

By Clarissa S. Batino

PHILIPPINE Long Distance Telephone Co. is expecting its net income this year to surpass an earlier forecast of P18 billion if plans of its profitable subsidiary Smart Communications Inc. to buy the debts and eventually acquire Pilipino Telephone Corp. push through.

PLDT chair Manuel Pangilinan said the company could beat its profit forecast of P17-P18 billion this year with Smart's acquisition of Piltel.

In 2003, the dominant carrier posted a net income of P11.2 billion, the highest in its 75-year history. PLDT's earnings came mainly from Smart's P16.1 billion in net income last year.

Smart said last Monday that it would acquire PLDT's 45-percent stake in debt-saddled Piltel if plans to absorb its P20.5-billion debt push through.

Pangilinan said that acquiring Piltel would boost Smart's profits by as much as P2 billion a year. Most of Smart's additional income would come from about P15 billion in tax savings arising from P50 billion in tax shield from Piltel's accumulated losses and provisions.

The PLDT chair said that feedback from Piltel's creditors on the proposal of Smart to absorb the debts was positive.

Smart gave Piltel creditors until April 19 to consider cash settlement at a discount, conversion into Smart's medium-term dollar loans at a discount, conversion into a 10-year debt of Smart, or a swap with sovereign dollar bonds held by Smart.

Marubeni, one of Piltel's biggest creditors, was consulted even before Smart finalized its offer.

"This proposal has been vetted to them. I could not speak for the creditors but let me just say that we would not have proceeded unless there are positive signals that we can do this thing," the PLDT chair told reporters.

Pangilinan said Piltel was also on track with its target of hitting P400 million in net earnings this year from a net loss of P3.35 billion in 2003. Piltel had lost P61 billion since 1997.

PLDT said sustained earnings and religious payment of debt would allow it to start paying dividends to common shareholders by 2005.

PLDT's total debt stood at $2.9 billion as of end-2003 and the company said it would reduce the level by $350-$370 million this year. Of the total obligations, PLDT accounted for about $2.5 billion while the rest are owed by Smart.

Pangilinan said the PLDT group would use Piltel's tax shield to reduce tax payments and improve earnings over a 5- to 7-year period.

He said this year, the company planned to use about P10 billion in net operating loss carryover or Nolco of Piltel that were about to expire.

Applying P10 billion in Nolco amounts to more than P3 billion in tax savings at a 32-percent tax rate.

Foreign buyer keen on PSE stake

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

A FOREIGN investor is considering to buy a 20-percent stake in the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE), a ranking government official said.

Chair Lilia Bautista of the Securities and Exchange Commission said her agency was informed of the interest in the PSE and by that of another local firm that was also looking at buying another 20-percent block in the local bourse.

"It's not a stock exchange," Bautista said of the interested buyers, but declined to identify them.

"Maybe that will help in attracting more companies to list specially if the investor is someone who has experience in the business," Bautista said.

PSE president Cayetano Paderanga Jr. confirmed that there was interest from investors but nothing concrete has come out of earlier discussions.

"As far as management is concerned there are no formal submissions and interest (from possible investors) has been expressed since the PSE was listed," said Zayber Protacio, PSE's legal counsel.

A group of stockbrokers earlier went to court to stop the PSE from completing the sale of its shares through a private transaction to institutional investors.

The Pasig regional trial court, however, declared the petition for a temporary restraining order moot and academic since the institutions were allowed to exercise their voting rights in the PSE elections last March 13.

Stockbrokers Ismael Cruz, Filomeno Francisco and Edgardo Guevara said they were opposed to the sale of the PSE's 40-percent stake to private institutions for a number of reasons. The transaction will raise an estimated P733 million from the sale of primary and secondary shares to the Government Service and Insurance System (GSIS), PLDT Beneficial Trust Fund, San Miguel Retirement Fund, Kim Eng Investment Ltd., KE Strategic Pte. Ltd, A. Soriano Corp. and Equinox Partners.

Stockbrokers said in a manifesto that the private placement was "consummated in undue haste" and lacked transparency. They also said that the transaction price of P119.50 per share "was extremely low and grossly disadvantageous to PSE stockholders."

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of March 26, 2004)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	16.75	16.75	16.5	16.5	382,000
Bank of the Phil. Islands	43.5	43.5	43.5	43.5	181,600
China Banking Corp.	670	670	670	670	10
Citystate Savings Bank	16.25	16.25	16.25	16.25	2,600
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	38.5	38.5	38.5	38.5	10,500
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.56	0.56	0.55	0.55	320,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	24.5	24.5	23.75	24	827,500
Phil. Savings Bank	27	27	27	27	10,100
Security Bank Corp.	16.5	16.5	16.5	16.5	13,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	25	25	24.5	24.5	48,200
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Manulife Financial Corp.	1980	2000	1980	2000	1,200
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1440	1455	1440	1455	6,610
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	18	18	18	18	105,000
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.66	0.66	0.64	0.64	2,170,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	800	800	785	800	60,400
Ipeople Inc.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	29,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	1.7	1.7	1.62	1.64	11,751,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	900	900	900	900	57,700
Philweb Corp.	0.013	0.013	0.012	0.012	362,000,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	17	17	16.5	16.5	21,900
Manila Electric Co. B	26.5	26.5	25	25	1,257,200
Petron Corp.	2.65	2.75	2.65	2.65	675,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.97	1	0.93	0.93	41,460,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	3	3	3	3	225,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.62	1.62	1.62	1.62	662,000
Union Cement Corp.	1.46	1.46	1.44	1.44	3,041,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	28	28	28	28	1,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	16.5	16.5	16.5	16.5	3,222,600
San Miguel Pure Foods A	42	42	42	42	1,300
Rfm Corp.	0.6	0.64	0.6	0.64	290,000
San Miguel Corp. A	55.5	56	55.5	56	20,800
San Miguel Corp. B	69.5	69.5	69.5	69.5	13,500
Universal Robina Corp.	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	2,499,000
Vitarich Corp.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	200,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Ayala Corp.	6.1	6.1	6.1	6.1	1,881,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	78,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	6,600,000
APC Group Inc.	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	900,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.48	1.48	1.48	1.48	30,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.52	0.52	0.49	0.49	7,700,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13	300,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	20.25	20.5	19.75	19.75	353,100
Global Equities Inc.	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	500,000
Ionics Inc.	1.26	1.26	1.26	1.26	20,000
Keppel Holdings	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	20,000
Medco Holdings	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	150,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.04	1.04	1	1.02	780,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.25	0.26	0.25	0.25	9,240,000
Philcomsat Holdings Corp.	1.18	1.18	1.18	1.18	47,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	10,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33	480,000
South China Resources Inc.	0.21	0.21	0.2	0.2	40,000
SPI Technologies Inc.	14	14	14	14	71,000
Unioil Res. & Holdings Co	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	100,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	49,480,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	100,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	1.02	1.02	1.02	1.02	120,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.49	0.5	0.49	0.5	550,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	0.31	0.35	0.31	0.35	780,000
Manila Jockey Club	7	7	7	7	37,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.23	50,000
Philippine Racing Club	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	5,850,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	18	18	17.75	18	338,800
PLDT (10% Pref) Series T	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,200
PLDT (10% Pref.) Series U	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,600
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,500
PLDT (10% Pref) Series W	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,400
PLDT (10% Pref) Series X	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,200
Philweb Corp. - Warrants	0.0002	0.0002	0.0002	0.0002	10,000,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	5.1	5.1	4.95	4.95	14,587,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.12	0.12	0.115	0.115	2,250,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.195	0.2	0.195	0.195	400,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	0.99	0.99	0.99	0.99	1,640,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.155	0.155	0.155	0.155	90,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.16	20,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	100,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	5.6	5.6	5.5	5.6	31,992,000
MINING					
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.2	0.2	0.195	.195?	350,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.0055	0.0055	0.0055	0.0055	3,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.38	0.38	0.38	.38?	180,000
OIL					
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.0028	0.0028	0.0028	0.0028	8,000,000

Gov't considers $100-M loan

From page B5

reasons to demand high interest rates.

The finance chief said the government might wait until after the elections to raise the additional $100-million financing requirement.

Last Friday, the government launched a $200-million foreign borrowing deal with Hong Kong Shanghai Banking Corp. as underwriter. The borrowing, which will have a maturity of 18 months, was said to have been completed although a formal announcement would still have to be made by the Department of Finance.

Earlier, the government raised $500 million from the sale of 11-year global bonds. The borrowing was successful despite perceived political risk brought by the coming elections and a presidential campaign statement on "debt restructuring," which was said to have made foreign lenders jittery over Philippine market condition.

Economic officials have cautioned political candidates from loosely using the term "debt-restructuring" because it created a false notion that the government could not anymore service its debt, therefore turning off foreign lenders.

CURRENCIES

March 28, 2004 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.824062629	1	56.397
Japan	Yen	0.007764	0.009422	0.5314
United Kingdom	Pound	1.489905	1.808	101.9658
Hongkong	Dollar	0.105687	0.128251	7.233
Switzerland	Franc	0.644	0.781494	44.0739
Canada	Dollar	0.619782	0.752106	42.4165
Singapore	Dollar	0.488044	0.592242	33.4007
Australia	Dollar	0.610462	0.740796	41.7787
Bahrain	Dinar'	2.1859	2.65259	149.5981
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.219756	0.266674	15.0396
Brunei	Dollar	0.486603	0.590493	33.302
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000096	0.000116	0.0065
Thailand	Baht	0.020846	0.025297	1.4267
UAE	Dirham	0.224369	0.272272	15.3553
Euro	Euro	1	1.2135	68.4378
ArgentinaPeso	0.285885	0.346921	19.5653	
Brazil	REAL	0.281154	0.34118	19.2415
Denmark	Kroner	0.134278	0.162946	9.1897
India	Rupee	0.01846	0.022401	1.2633
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.216888	0.263193	14.8433
Mexico	New Peso	0.074711	0.090662	5.1131
New Zealand	Dollar	0.533339	0.647207	36.5005
Norway	Kroner	0.11857	0.143885	8.1147
Pakistan	Rupee	0.014419	0.017498	0.9868
South Africa	Rand	0.126115	0.153041	8.6311
Korea	Won	0.000712	0.000864	0.0487
Sweden	Kroner	0.107885	0.130919	7.3834
Syria	Pound	0.018677	0.022665	1.2782
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.024888	0.030202	1.7033
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.00043	0.000522	0.0294

Gov't urged to open . . .

From page B1

sources sectors, including oil and with respect to banks and insurance companies.

"Obviously, the Philippines lags far behind," he said. "There are very few sectors of the Philippine economy that can justify restrictions on foreign investment except as protection of vested local interests."

"Throwing the doors open to foreign investment would create more jobs for Filipinos and help create Philippine firms that can successfully compete in the world market," Fulton said.

Slow trading seen

From page B1

go sideways and rebuild confidence," Jovis Vistan of AB Capital Securities Inc., said.

" But we believe that the market has digested a lot of bad news very early and they may have taken too much cash off the table too quickly. Corporate fundamentals and the underlying economy remain positive, but investors will likely need better economic data and earnings to pull out of the correction that has kept the major indices down for the past few weeks," he added.

Elizabeth L. Sanchez

G & W clubshares
SEC License Broker No. A-?????
As of March 29, 2004

BEST BUYS

Alabang Country Club A	1,100,000
Alabang Country Club B	1,200,000
Baguio Country Club	660,000
Canlubang Golf	430,000
Manila Southwoods A	420,000
Sherwood A	60,000

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OTHER SHARES AVAILABLE

CLUB	SELLER	BUYER
Alta Vista	-	200,000
Baguio Country Club	-	630,000
Calatagan Golf	70,000	-
Canyonwoods	140,000	-
Camp John Hay	240,000	190,000
Capitol Hills	160,000	130,000
Club Filipino	-	120,000
Eagleridge A/B/"C"*	280,000*	
Eastridge A/B*	-	70,000/90,000*
Manila Golf Ind/Corp.*	-	9,500,000
Manila Polo	2,400,000	2,250,000
Makati Sports Club	200,000	Pls. Call
Metropolitan Club B	-	100,000
Mimosa C2/C3*	220,000	280,000*
Mimosa Golf Ind.	180,000	120,000
Punta Fuego *	-	450,000
Riviera Golf A/B*	120,000/160,000*	110,000*
Rockwell Leisure Club	200,000	-
Royale Tagaytay CC	Pls. Call	-
Sta. Elena A	Pls. Call	1,100,000
Tagaytay Country Club	-	310,000
Tagaytay Highlands Golf	810,000	-
Tagaytay Midlands	660,000	-
The Country Club	2,000,000	-
Valley Golf & CC	280,000	-
Valle Verde Ind.	-	-
Wack Wack Golf	6,700,000	6,400,000

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	SELLING	BUYING
Alabang Country Club	1.1M	please call
Baguio Country Club	650K	-
Camp John Hay	230K	-
Celebrity Sports Club	170K	-
Club Filipino		130K
Eagleridge Golf Club "A"	250K	
Eagleridge Golf Club "B"	300K	250K
Filipinas Golf & Country Club	300K	
Fontana "D"	50K	
Makati Sports Club "A"	please call	180K
Manila Golf Club (Ind)	please call	10.0M
Manila Golf Club (Corp.)	-	11M
Manila Polo Club	please call	2.3M
Manila Southwoods "A"	375K	
Manila Southwoods "B"	550K	
Manila Yacht Club		250K
Metro Club		100K
Mimosa C2	170K	
Orchard Golf Club "A"		150K
Orchard Golf Club "B"	please call	230K
Puerto Azul Beach Club -"B"		60K
Punta Fuego		370K
Quezon City Sports Club	150K	
Riviera Golf Club "B"		120K
Rockwell Club	280K	
Subic Yacht Club	please call	
Tagaytay Higlands Golf Club		780K
Tagaytay Midlands	680K	
Wack Wack Golf Club	7.3M	

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GG & A Club Shares
SEC License Broker #007575 * As of March 29, 2004

CLUB	BUYER	SELLER
Alabang Country Club "A" (Filipino)	1,000,000	1,200,000
Alabang Country Club "B" (Foreigner)	-	1,300,000
Baguio Country Club	600,000	700,000
Calatagan Golf Club "A"	-	60,000
Camp John Hay	-	220,000
Canlubang	-	500,000
Canyonwoods	-	180,000
Capitol Hills	125,000	135,000
Cebu Country Club	1,100,000	Please Call
Celebrity Sports Club	-	170,000
Club Filipino	100,000	170,000
Eagleridge "A"	220,000	270,000
Eagleridge "B"	280,000	350,000
Eagleridge "C"	-	350,000
Forest Hills "A"	-	180,000
Forest Hills "B"	-	230,000
Forest Hills "C"	-	250,000
Makati Sports Club "A"	180,000	240,000
Makati Sports Club "B"	-	250,000
Manila Golf (Corporate)	10,500,000	-
Manila Golf (Individual)	9,500,000	10,400,000
Manila Polo	2,250,000	2,400,000
Manila Southwoods "A"	350,000	430,000
Manila Southwoods "B"	500,000	550,000
Manila Yacht Club	250,000	400,000
Metroclub "A"	100,000	-
Mimosa (Corporate)	250,000	275,000
Mt. Malarayat Gold "A"	150,000	Please Call
Mt. Malarayat Gold "C"		400,000
Orchard Golf Club "A"	150,000	180,000
Orchard Golf Club "C"	250,000	330,000
Quezon City Sports Club	-	200,000
Sherwood Hills "A"	-	70,000
Sherwood Hills "C"	-	180,000
Rockwell	-	380,000
Spa & Lodge	-	600,000
Sta. Elena "A"	1,150,000	1,400,000
Sta. Elena "B"	1,400,000	-
Subic Bay Yacht (Corporate)	-	180,000
Subic Bay Yacht (Individual)	-	120,000
Tagaytay Country Club	310,000	330,000
Tagaytay Highlands	750,000	850,000
Tagaytay Midlands	-	670,000
Valle Verde (Individual)	100,000	150,000
Valle Verde (Corporate)	170,000	250,000
Valley Golf	230,000	300,000
Wack-Wack Golf Club	6,400,000	6,700,000

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As of March 29, 2004

CLUB	BUYER	SELLER
Capitol Hills	-	180,000
Celebrity Sports Club	-	250,000
Eagleridge "A"	-	270,000
Fairways & Blue Water "C1"	-	320,000
Fontana "D"	-	70,000
Forest Hills "A"	130,000	185,000
Forest Hills "B"	170,000	210,000
Manila Polo	2,200,000	-
Makati Sports Club "A"	-	250,000
Orchard "A"	-	160,000
Punta Fuego	400,000	-
Riviera "C"	-	180,000
Rockwell Club	-	320K/370K
Royale Tagaytay	-	70,000
Sherwoods "A"	-	100,000
Tagaytay Midlands	-	700,000
Tagaytay Country Club	310,000	380,000
Wack Wack Golf Club	6,400,000	-

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NOTICE OF ANNUAL STOCKHOLDERS' MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the Annual Meeting of Stockholders of **EQUITABLE PCI BANK, INC.**, will be held on **April 20, 2004 at 3:00 p.m.** at the Francisco Santiago Hall, Mezzanine Floor, Equitable PCI Bank Tower I, Makati Avenue corner H.V. dela Costa Street, Makati City, Metro Manila, to consider and approve the matters set forth in the following Agenda:

AGENDA

I. Call to Order
II. Certification of Notice and Quorum
III. Approval of the Minutes of the Annual Stockholders' Meeting held on April 15, 2003
IV. Presentation of Annual Report
V. Approval and Ratification of Acts and Proceedings of the Board of Directors, the Duly Constituted Committees and Corporate Officers
VI. Election of the Board of Directors
VII. Appointment of External Auditor
VIII. Other Business
IX. Adjournment

The record date for the determination of the stockholders entitled to notice of, and to vote at, said meeting is fixed at the close of business hours on January 15, 2004.

Please bring any form of identification in order to facilitate registration.

(sgd) ATTY. NILO T. DIVINA
Senior Vice President / General Counsel
& Corporate Secretary

Napocor power output up 2% in '03

By Abigail L. Ho

ELECTRICITY produced by National Power Corp. went up 2.01 percent in 2003 to 38,926 gigawatt-hours (GWh) from 38,158 GWh the previous year.

Data from Napocor's sales and services group showed that the power plants owned and operated by the state firm accounted for 38.19 percent of total power output in 2003.

Napocor plants operated by independent power producers generated the remaining 61.81 percent of total electricity produced last year.

The bulk of the power produced in 2003 came from Luzon plants at 25,209 GWh, representing 64.76 percent of gross generation.

The second highest power output came from the Visayas at 7,262 GWh, accounting for 18.66 percent of total production. Mindanao plants contributed the remaining 16.58 percent of gross generation at 6,455 GWh.

While just coming in as the third highest electricity producer in 2003, Mindanao posted the highest generation growth, chalking up an 8.07-percent increase in output from 2002's 5,973 GWh.

Of the total power generated, coal-fired power plants had the biggest share of the pie at 12,067 GWh or around 31 percent of the entire production mix. This figure, however, represented a decline from the 2002 output of 14,018 GWh, which then accounted for 36.74 percent of total production.

Geothermal plants were the second biggest contributors, churning out 9,822 GWh of electricity in 2003 or 25.23 percent of the whole production mix. But this figure also reflected a decline from the year-ago output of 9,972 GWh, representing 26.13 of the generation mix.

The third biggest producers were the country's hydroelectric plants, accounting for 20.07 percent of the generation pie at 7,813 GWh. Unlike coal-fired and geothermal plants, hydroelectric plants showed an increase in production from 6,941 GWh in 2002 or 18.19 percent of total output then.

But the most dramatic increase in production came from natural gas plants, which registered a share of 11.57 percent at 4,505 GWh, up from 2002's 7.87 percent at 3,002 GWh.

Oil-based power plants contributed another 4,718 GWh of electricity or 12.12 percent of gross generation in 2003, reflecting an output growth from 2002's 4,226 GWh or 11.07 percent of the generation pie then.

Gov't wooing DaimlerChrysler to invest in RP

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE GOVERNMENT recently asked auto maker DaimlerChrysler to do business in the country.

The pitch was made during a meeting in Malaysia between company executives and trade officials from Southeast Asian nations.

Trade Secretary Cesar V. Purisima said in a press briefing that DaimlerChrysler had sent its Asean expert council in Kuala Lumpur for a conference with Southeast Asian government officials on the situation of the automotive industry in the region and the world.

"No decision was made and nothing specific was mentioned on whether the company will make any investment in the region," Purisima said.

He said, however, that the auto maker was continuing to expand in Asia.

"This company is always looking for opportunities for expansion," Purisima said. "It has identified Asean and China as growth areas in Asia."

According to the DaimlerChrysler's website, the group earned total revenue of 136.4 billion euros in 2003.

The firm plans to lay out investment expenses amounting to 38 billion euros from 2004 to 2006.

Owned by European, American and other international investors, DaimlerChrysler shares are traded in key stock exchanges in the world including those in New York, Frankfurt and Tokyo.

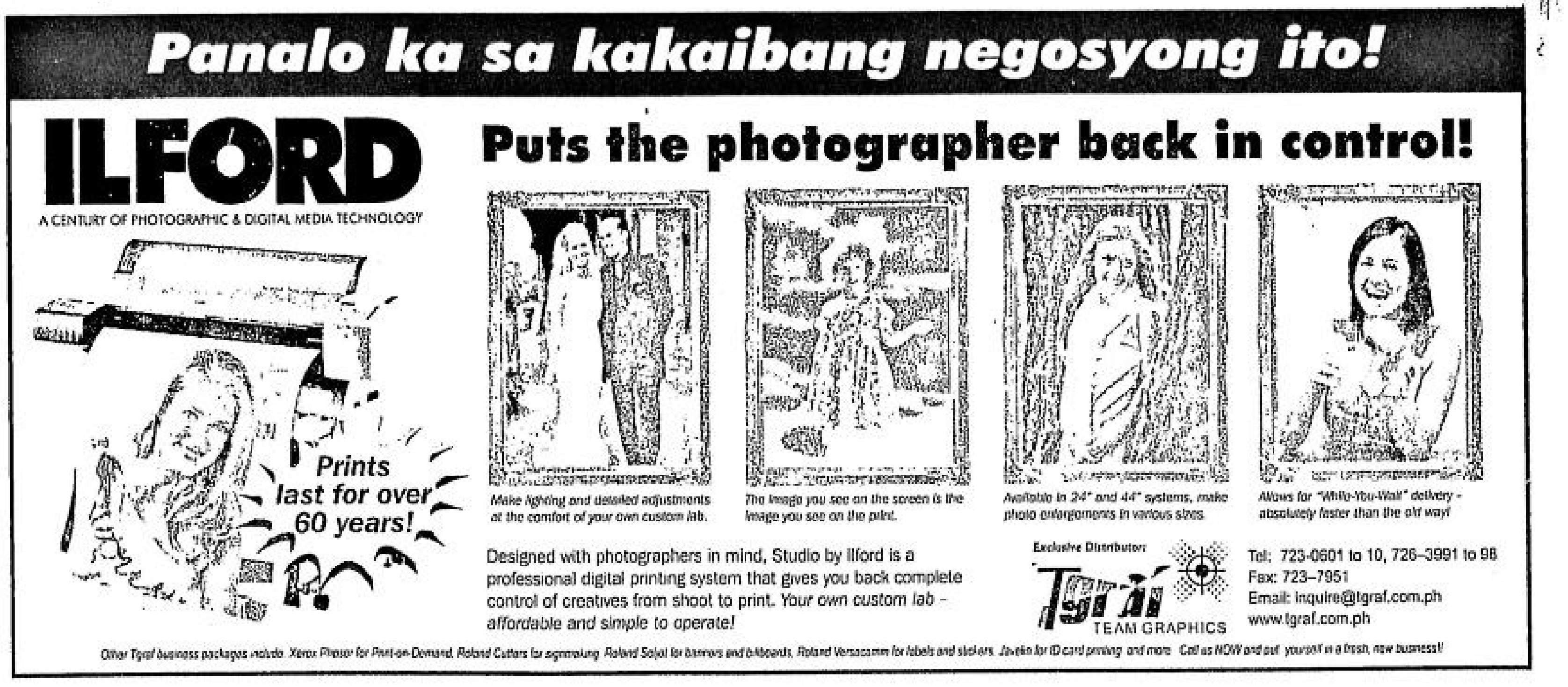
The firm has facilities in 37 countries and its product portfolio ranges from small cars to sport cars and luxury sedans, vans, coaches and heavy duty trucks.

The company's brands—sold in more than 200 countries—include Maybach, Mercedez-Benz, Chrysler, Jeep, Dodge, smart Freightliner, Sterling, Western Star, Setra and Mitsubishi Fuso.

DaimlerChrysler maintains strategic partnerships with Mitsubishi Fuso Truck and Bus Corp., Mitsubishi Motors Corp. and Hyundai Motor Corp.

In the meantime, the local market is still experiencing a slowdown as the Chamber of Automotive Manufacturers of the Philippines (Campi) and the Truck Manufacturers Association (TMA) earlier reported an 18.7 percent decline in vehicle sales in February due to an increase in prices brought about by the depreciation of the peso.

The decline was evident in the sales of commercial vehicles—light trucks, trucks and buses, Asian utility vehicles and light commercial vehicles—which account for 60 percent of the vehicle market.



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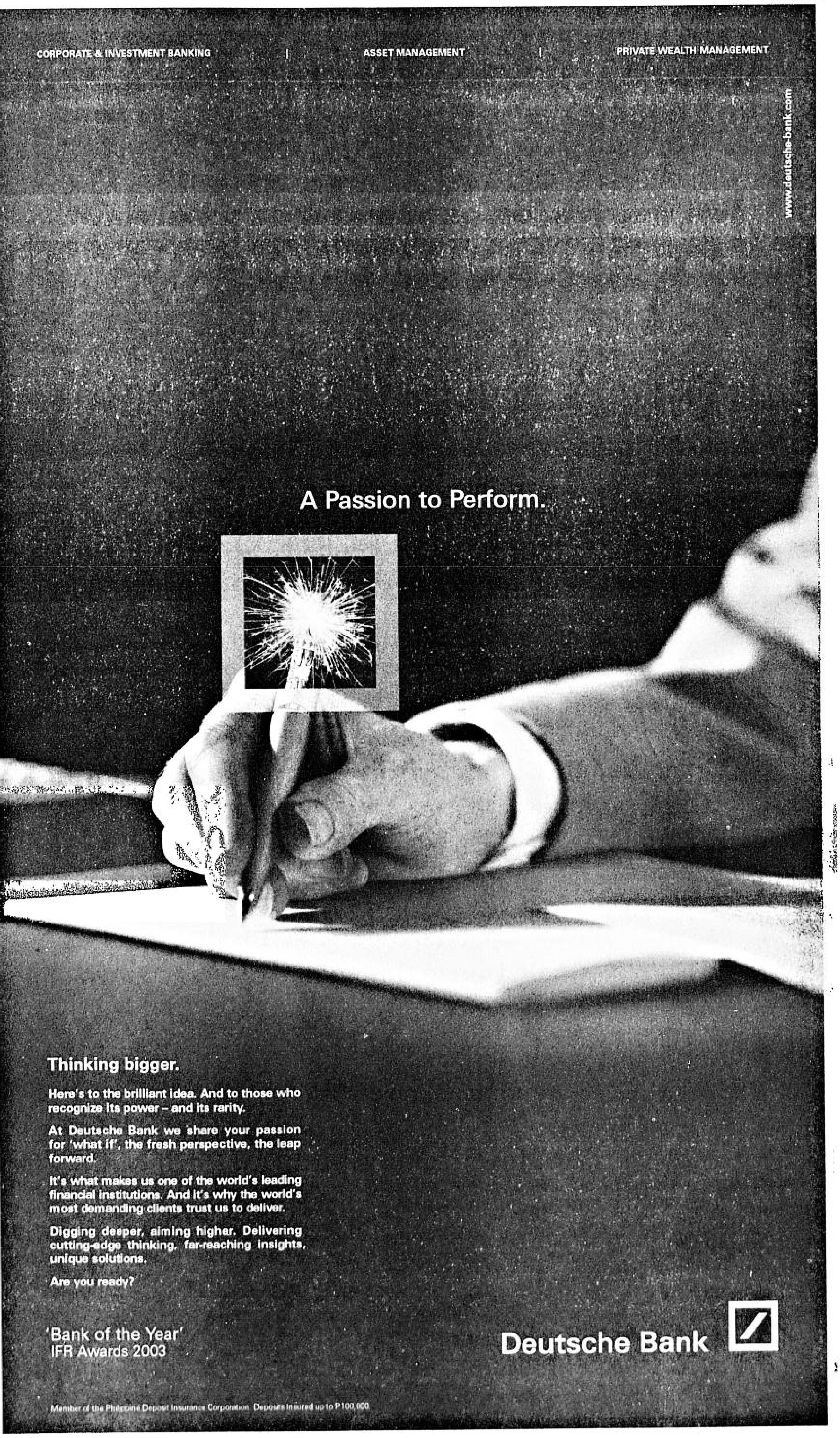

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By Abigail L. Ho

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Napocor plants operated by independent power producers generated the remaining 61.81 percent of total electricity produced last year.

The bulk of the power produced in 2003 came from Luzon plants at 25,209 GWh, representing 64.76 percent of gross generation.

The second highest power output came from the Visayas at 7,262 GWh, accounting for 18.66 percent of total production. Mindanao plants contributed the remaining 16.58 percent of gross generation at 6,455 GWh.

While just coming in as the third highest electricity producer in 2003, Mindanao posted the highest generation growth, chalking up an 8.07-percent increase in output from 2002's 5,973 GWh.

Of the total power generated, coal-fired power plants had the biggest share of the pie at 12,067 GWh or around 31 percent of the entire production mix. This figure, however, represented a decline from the 2002 output of 14,018 GWh, which then accounted for 36.74 percent of total production.

Geothermal plants were the second biggest contributors, churning out 9,822 GWh of electricity in 2003 or 25.23 percent of the whole production mix. But this figure also reflected a decline from the year-ago output of 9,972 GWh, representing 26.13 of the generation mix.

The third biggest producers were the country's hydroelectric plants, accounting for 20.07 percent of the generation pie at 7,813 GWh. Unlike coal-fired and geothermal plants, hydroelectric plants showed an increase in production from 6,941 GWh in 2002 or 18.19 percent of total output then.

But the most dramatic increase in production came from natural gas plants, which registered a share of 11.57 percent at 4,505 GWh, up from 2002's 7.87 percent at 3,002 GWh.

Oil-based power plants contributed another 4,718 GWh of electricity or 12.12 percent of gross generation in 2003, reflecting an output growth from 2002's 4,226 GWh or 11.07 percent of the generation pie then.

Gov't wooing DaimlerChrysler to invest in RP

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE GOVERNMENT recently asked auto maker DaimlerChrysler to do business in the country.

The pitch was made during a meeting in Malaysia between company executives and trade officials from Southeast Asian nations.

Trade Secretary Cesar V. Purisima said in a press briefing that DaimlerChrysler had sent its Asean expert council in Kuala Lumpur for a conference with Southeast Asian government officials on the situation of the automotive industry in the region and the world.

"No decision was made and nothing specific was mentioned on whether the company will make any investment in the region," Purisima said.

He said, however, that the auto maker was continuing to expand in Asia.

"This company is always looking for opportunities for expansion," Purisima said. "It has identified Asean and China as growth areas in Asia."

According to the DaimlerChrysler's website, the group earned total revenue of 136.4 billion euros in 2003.

The firm plans to lay out investment expenses amounting to 38 billion euros from 2004 to 2006.

Owned by European, American and other international investors, DaimlerChrysler shares are traded in key stock exchanges in the world including those in New York, Frankfurt and Tokyo.

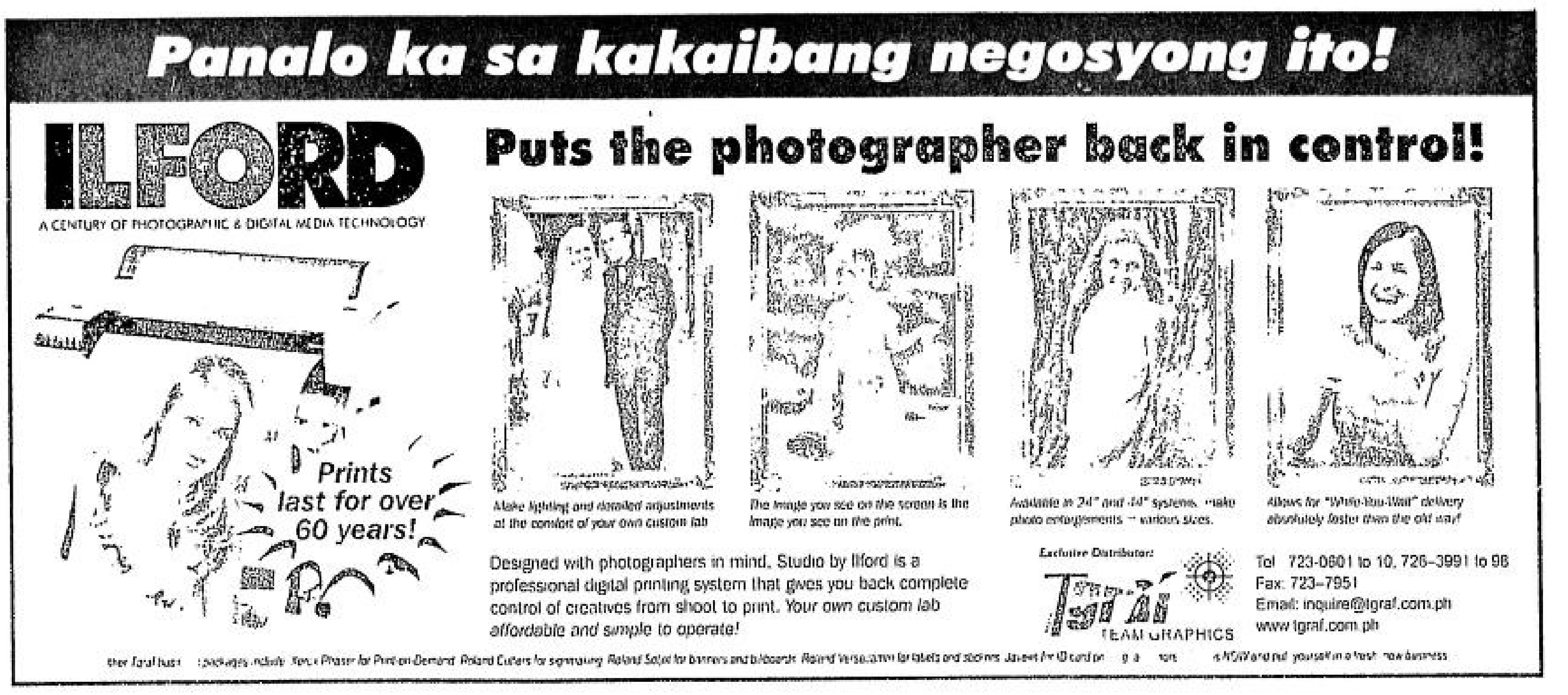
The firm has facilities in 37 countries and its product portfolio ranges from small cars to sport cars and luxury sedans, vans, coaches and heavy duty trucks.

The company's brands—sold in more than 200 countries—include Maybach, Mercedez-Benz, Chrysler, Jeep, Dodge, smart Freightliner, Sterling, Western Star, Setra and Mitsubishi Fuso.

DaimlerChrysler maintains strategic partnerships with Mitsubishi Fuso Truck and Bus Corp., Mitsubishi Motors Corp. and Hyundai Motor Corp.

In the meantime, the local market is still experiencing a slowdown as the Chamber of Automotive Manufacturers of the Philippines (Campi) and the Truck Manufacturers Association (TMA) earlier reported an 18.7 percent decline in vehicle sales in February due to an increase in prices brought about by the depreciation of the peso.

The decline was evident in the sales of commercial vehicles—light trucks, trucks and buses, Asian utility vehicles and light commercial vehicles- which account for 60 percent of the vehicle market.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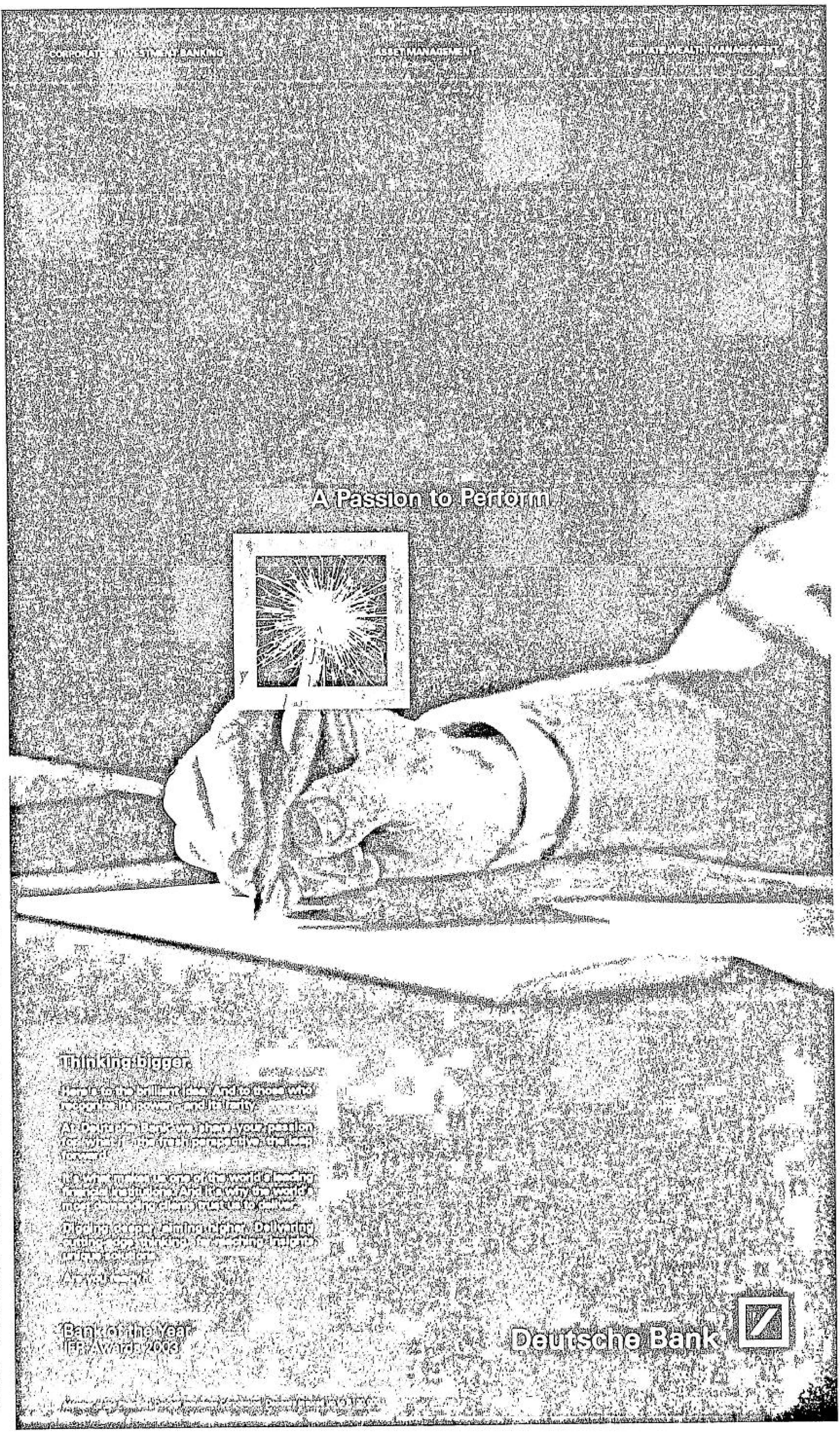
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For their deep commitment and tireless efforts that led to the passage of the following laws that will improve savings and investment mobilization and thus, enhance the performance of the Philippine economy.

THE SECURITIZATION ACT OF 2004
RATIONALIZATION OF THE DOCUMENTARY STAMP TAX (DST) - RA 9243
GROSS RECEIPT TAX - VALUE ADDED TAX (GRT-VAT) - RA 9238
FOREIGN CURRENCY DEPOSIT UNITS (FCDU) - SBN 2747

ADVT

BETTER MILLGATE PRICES

Prospects of sugar industry getting brighter

SUGAR industry eyeing recovery

By Carla P. Gomez
PDI Visayas Bureau

BACOLOD CITY—Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo said the future of the sugar industry was getting brighter as millgate prices of the commodity started rallying after a series of measures were put in place by the government to shore up sugar prices.

"We believe the (sugar) industry is definitely a sunrise industry and has a good future. It is well organized and it knows where it is going. Its master plan spells out quite clearly what it needs to do," he said.

Sugar Regulatory Administrator James Ledesma also said that it looked like the rally in millgate sugar prices was being sustained as prices went up by P10 to P15 per 50-kilo bag on Thursday, or from P692 to P713 per lkg.

To help prop up millgate sugar prices, President Macapagal-Arroyo earlier directed the National Food Authority (NFA) to buy sugar to siphon off excess supply in the market.

Lorenzo said the NFA had budgeted P1 billion for its sugar buying intervention, which, he added, should be good for 70,000 tons of sugar or 1,400,000 lkg. The program will last until this fund is exhausted or up to the middle of April, he said.

"Ledesma is on top of this and coordinating very closely with the NFA on adjustments in the schedule of buying beyond the initial four weeks if the need is still there," Lorenzo added.

NFA has bought more than 135,000 lkg and has released more than P100 million in Negros Occidental alone, he said.

He said the NFA could dispose of the sugar through their rolling stores or by selling it to industrial users. But the NFA would not be competing with the local traders and would dispose its sugar stock when the milling season would have ended, which is about July or August, he said.

Lorenzo said there would also be no oversupply of sugar as the Philippines has exported to the world market 60,000 metric tons and 1,437,000 MT to the US market.

By August, the sugar supply would just be enough to meet the domestic demand until the next milling picks up in October, he said.

Lorenzo also revealed that the Department of Agriculture has also taken many initiatives in cooperation with the anti-smuggling task force to stop sugar smuggling. Although there has been no major arrest, he said they had some success in making the entry of the illegal sugar more difficult.

Nokia lands on Fortune's list of admired firms

NOKIA, the world leader in mobile communication, leads Fortune Magazine's annual list of the World's Most Admired Companies.

In the recently released list, Nokia landed in the Global Top 20 even beating other European companies such as Nestle, L'oreal and Colgate Palmolive.

The list was based on a survey covering 10,000 directors, executives and managers of 346 companies around the world. The companies are ranked based on nine attributes such as the following: Innovation, use of corporate assets, "global-ness," quality of management, employee talent, financial soundness, long-term investment value, social responsibility, and quality of products and services.

Nokia is a dynamic brand that sets the pace in technology. In the Philippines, Nokia introduced the Nokia 7650, the first phone with an integrated camera ushering in a new age of communication through multimedia messaging service. Nokia also came out with products that brought music to wherever the end user wants to be through the Nokia 5510. With its uniqueness and character, Nokia is able to offer the end-user a greater range of personalization and expression through its wide array of products and services.

GOINGS-ON

Petron exec bags award

THE PHILIPPINE Institute of Chemical Engineers recently conferred its highest honor on an executive of Petron Corp. who initiated several environmental projects during his tenure with the firm.

Alfred Trio, Petron VP for refinery , received the "Outstanding Chemical Engineer Award" during the PIChe National convention in Makati.

In his almost 30 years in Petron, Trio facilitated the implementation of environmental projects, including the installation of a continuous catalytic reforming unit and a sulfur recovery unit in the company's Bataan refinery in the late 1990s.

He is presently overseeing the construction of an isometrization unit and an additional gasoil hydrotreater, which will give Petron the distinction of being the only local refiner capable of producing Clean Air Act-compliant fuels.

Hog farmers' confab

THE NATIONAL Federation of Hog Farmers Inc. will hold its 13th Annual Convention and Trade Exhibits on April 2-4 at the SM Mega Trade Hall in Mandaluyong City, national chair Nemesio G. Co said.

This year's event will be hosted by the Alliance of Swine Producers Association and will bring together the stakeholders in the hog raising industry to discuss the current state and issues faced by the sector.

Agriculture Secretary Luis P. Lorenzo Jr. will be the conference guest speaker on opening day. The other speakers are former Agriculture Secretary Ernesto M. Ordoñez and Sen. Robert Jaworski.

The trade exhibits will feature seminars on topics pertinent to the industry.

The trade exhibits and the seminars are open to the public free of charge. For more information, call the NFHFI secretariat at Tel. No. 725-36-18 and 726-36-44

C-Cubed sees growth

CUSTOMERS Contact Center Inc. (C-Cubed), the first and only ISO 9001:2001 certified contact center in the Philippines, reported a profit of P35 million for last year.

"Last year, C-Cubed enjoyed three major accomplishments—the entry of new owners, a profit of P35 million and the doubling in the number of seats," reports J. Xavier "Eckie" Gonzales, C-Cubed CEO and co-owner.

Backed by international partners from the United States and India, Gonzales looks forward to making C-Cubed the premier outsourcing contact center operator in the country.

Gonzales said C-Cubed would put up another contact center facility in Metro Manila or in key neighboring province to accommodate its growing list of clients. C-Cubed has doubled its agents seats from 600 to 1,200. The additional seats are generated to support the company's two new verticals, outbound services and technical support.

C-CUBED provides contact center services to leading companies in North America. It also supports projects for local companies such as Meralco and offices of multinational firms such as Pilipinas Shell, HSBC, and AIG-Philam. C-Cubed currently operates two call centers in Metro Manila, providing customer support 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Its main facility is located in Eastwood City, Libis.

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Asean seen pushing for further opening of Japan air space

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE PHILIPPINES is planning to seek the backing of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in convincing Japan to open its air space to more foreign commercial airlines.

Currently, only Philippine Air Lines could fly to Japan because it got all the available frequencies the Japanese government had given, leaving no seats for second-biggest player Cebu Pacific, which has been seeking a share in the frequency to this destination.

Civil Aeronautics Board executive director Tomas Mañalac said the country's air panel believed that Japan could agree to further open up its aviation industry to more commercial airlines if the Asean would exert diplomatic pressure.

"We will seek the backing of the Asean in urging Japan to open its aviation market. We need to expand our air agreement with Japan because PAL is using all the frequencies," Mañalac told reporters.

The CAB chief said he was confident that Vietnam would support the bid to liberalize Japan's aviation market.

Mañalac said the Philippines would initiate the move and prepare a draft to be presented to the 10-member Asean in September, the next regional meeting on air policies.

Gokongwei-owned Cebu Pacific earlier alleged that the CAB had given PAL preferential treatment by giving all the frequencies to Japan to the airline controlled by Lucio Tan.

The Philippines has been courting Japan to agree to an open skies regime that will lift restrictions on capacity entitlements and frequency of passenger, cargo and chartered flights. Japan, however, did not grant the request.

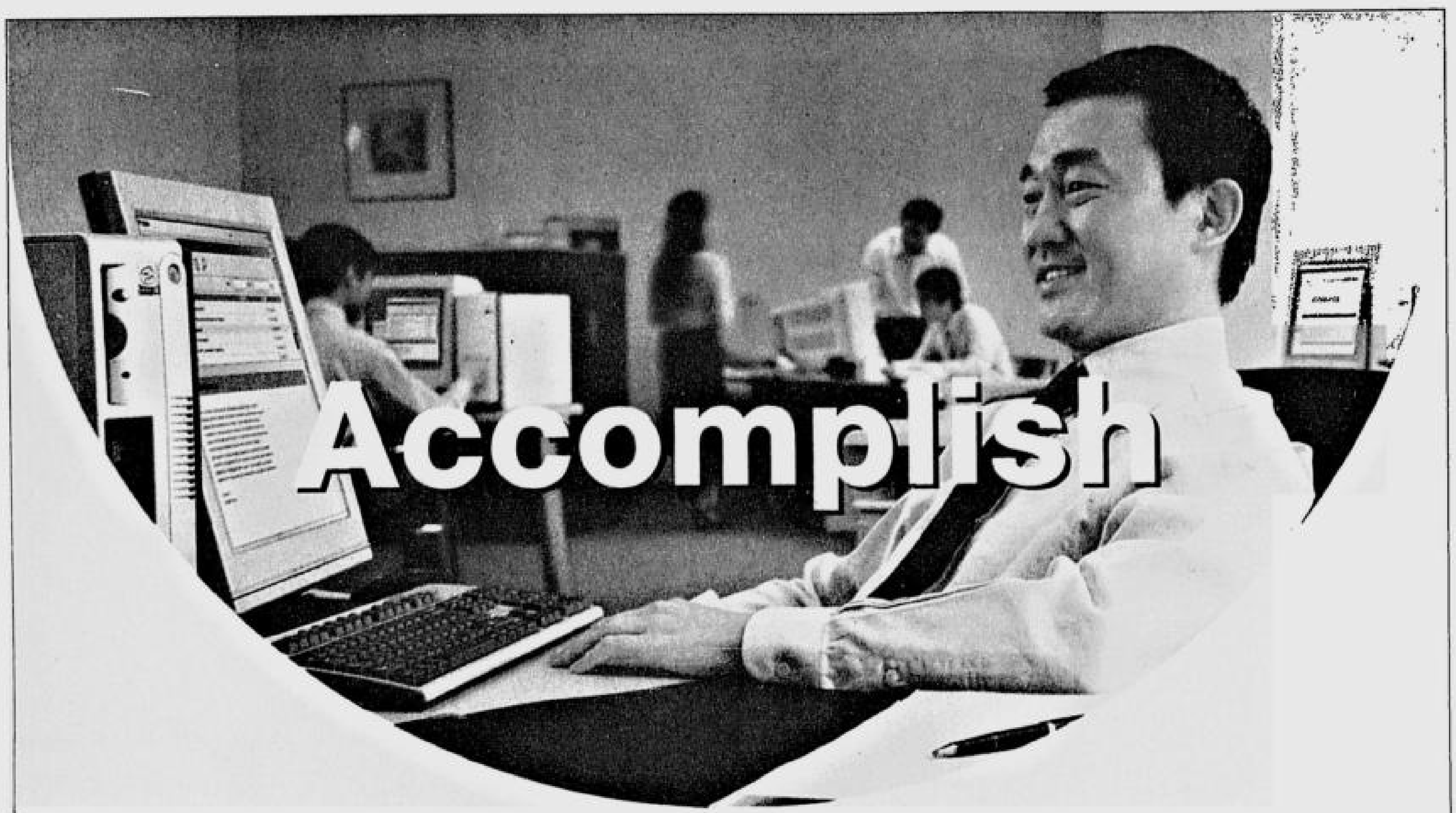
In October 2002, the Philippines and Japan agreed to add four new coefficients to each other's frequency entitlements. One coefficient is equivalent to one round trip flight using a Boeing 757; 1.5 coefficients for an Airbus330; and two coefficients for a B747.

Cebu Pacific, which was already flying to Hong Kong and South Korea at that time had sought two of the four new entitlements but CAB gave all four coefficients to PAL which already holds all the 43 coefficients to Japan. The Gokongwei airline had contested the CAB decision and asked the board to reconsider but to no avail.

A transport official said that two years ago, Cebu Pacific was still using the DC-9 aircraft and Japan allows only bigger planes.

Another official said that the Gokongwei carrier also obtained practically all the entitlements to South Korea.

A CAB official last year said that the Japan frequencies were given to PAL to strengthen the country's hold in an important destination like Japan following the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attack in the United States that spooked air travelers all over the world.



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LORENZO

Gov't to revive studies on ethanol production

By Carla P. Gomez
PDI Visayas Bureau

BACOLOD CITY—The Department of Agriculture has revived the studies on the feasibility of producing ethanol, a fuel additive from sugar.

"Ethanol, as a fuel additive, seems to be the most promising alternative use for our sugarcane," said Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo on Friday.

He said measures were being undertaken to find alternative uses for sugar in a bid to modernize the industry.

The most interesting research at this time is revisiting the old alcohol program, which today has evolved into an ethanol program, he said.

"Brazil has had tremendous success in this and we would like to see if we can do it here in the Philippines," Lorenzo said.

Groundwork laid

"Actually, the industry has already started laying the groundwork in going into this, but at this time it is still on the level of updating old studies," he added.

According to the secretary, about 50 metric tons of the "D" sugar or sugar for export will be used by the industry to do a test run in the manufacture of alcohol with the objective of establishing some cost parameters.

"We will proceed from the results of this run, which will be done in Tarlac," he said.

Lorenzo was in Negros Occidental on Friday to speak at the Negros State College of Agriculture commencement rites in Kabankalan City, Negros Occidental.

In his speech, Lorenzo said agriculture was the backbone of "our rural economy, exerting the greatest, direct impact on the livelihood and quality of life of the majority of our people, particularly the poor."

Sustaining growth

"And because it employs two out of three Filipinos, and feeds three out of four of our poor," he said, "sustaining agricultural growth and productivity is crucial to food security as well as to ensuring long-term development and genuine peace in the country."

Under the Macapagal administration, Lorenzo said the growth in agriculture soared to an annual average of 4 percent Gross Value Added (GVA) from the depths of 1.2 percent of the previous administration, he said.

The highest output was attained in 2002 with an increase of 4.6, he added.

Creating vision

"I consider last year's 3.6 percent GVA growth even more significant because it surpassed the actual harvest figures of a particularly good year for agriculture, and overcame the merciless weather in 2003—with the tail-end of El Niño searing the first quarter and two super-typhoons rampaging in the third quarter," he said.

He advised the graduates to create the grandest vision possible for their life because they can become what they believe, know themselves, turn their mistakes into wisdom and become entrepreneurs.

"Instead of feeling bad about things you don't have, be grateful for things that you have," he said.

Turning . . .

From page B2

bers of their own idealism.

Zobel and his brother Fernando, Ayala co-vice chair and executive managing director, themselves participated in the conference, and found themselves enriched by the experience.

The investment is already starting to pay off as a good number of the AYLC alumni have gone on to do worthwhile projects after finishing school. Some have involved themselves in nongovernment organizations, others in the Youth Build program of the Habitat for Humanity, and a number have taken up jobs within the Ayala group.

Zobel said the ultimate objective is to develop AYLC alumni, as they grow in number, into a powerful catalyst for change and national renewal.

"Over time, AYLC hopes to contribute in the development of a powerful group of change agents and servant leaders from among these young Filipinos," Zobel said.

BRUSSELS MEET
Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi gestures to illustrate his point during a news conference at the end of a European Union summit in Brussels. EU leaders have been meeting to discuss how to turn the bloc into the world's most competitive economy. REUTERS

US treasury bonds take a dive as consumer confidence soars

NEW YORK—United States Treasury prices fell on Friday as improved consumer confidence and inflation created a selling opportunity for traders worried about next week's jobs report.

In a market obsessed with the state of the labor market, investors are on the defensive, just in case March payrolls data reveal the start of the long-awaited hiring spree that has so far proved elusive.

After several months of disappointments, a substantial one-month increase in hiring is not out of the question, based on sheer statistical probability.

Frustration with a tough job market prevented Americans from getting too excited about the nation's economic prospects in March, although the University of Michigan's sentiment gauge did show a modest rise for the month.

Alongside a jump in a closely watched inflation gauge, the improvement in confidence was enough to get Treasury bondholders to start selling again.

"The market got a little bit spooked by the uptick in inflation and the jump in confidence," said David Ging, fixed-income strategist at Credit Suisse First Boston. "That combination of data was enough to tip the boat."

By late afternoon, the benchmark 10-year note was off a full point in price for a yield of 3.84 percent from 3.74 late Thursday.

It was the biggest one-day yield jump in two months.

Five-year notes slipped 16/32 for a yield of 2.79 percent from 2.68 percent.

The 30-year bond lost 1-4/32, its yield at 4.76 percent from 4.70 percent, while yields on two-year notes edged up to 1.58 percent from 1.51 percent.

The University of Michigan's final reading of consumer confidence edged up to 95.8 in March from 94.4 in February.

A preliminary mid-month reading put the index at 94.1, while economists had been looking for a dip in the final measure to 93.7.

Analysts noted that the Conference Board's measure of confidence, due on Tuesday, will offer more direct insight on the labor market since that poll actually asks respondents to rate how difficult it is for them to find work.

Most market participants believe the Federal Reserve will refrain from raising interest rates unless and until there is a sustained pick-up in jobs.

And without job growth, analysts worry that consumer spending, which supports two-thirds of the US economy, could begin to falter.

So far, such fears have proved largely unfounded.

Economic data released earlier on Friday showed personal spending rose 0.2 percent in February—analysts had looked for a 0.4 percent gain—while real spending, adjusted for inflation, was flat.

However, spending was revised up for the previous three months.

Personal income rose 0.4 percent, a little more than forecast, but disposable income rose a lower-than-expected 0.2 percent.

That softness was balanced by upward revisions to the core personal consumption expenditures deflator, the Fed's favored inflation measure.

Annual growth in the core measure of personal consumption rose to 1.1 percent in February, having been raised to 1.0 percent in January from the original 0.8 percent.

Fed officials have hinted that a reading below 1.0 percent was outside their comfort zone, so the rise to 1.1 percent will likely be a relief to some and may encourage those agitating for an early tightening in policy. *Reuters*

Disclosure of fund execs' pay seen to hurt US investors

BOSTON—While an industry scandal has brought about calls for more disclosure, mutual fund companies, such as the Vanguard Group, say publicizing portfolio managers' salaries could backfire and wind up harming investors.

Portfolio managers' compensation has become an especially touchy topic in the wake of improper trading scandals in the $7.5-trillion industry, which handles investments for more than half of the country's households.

Vanguard, the nation's No. 2 mutual fund company, made its views known just after the US Securities and Exchange Commission disclosed the "lavish compensation" of two former Putnam Investments fund managers, who have been accused of improper trading in their own portfolios.

Last week, the SEC said Putnam's Justin Scott took in $14.3 million in 2000, when markets were on a tear, and his colleague Omid Kamshad earned $8.7 million.

"There is no advantage whatsoever to disclosing the compensation of portfolio managers," said Brian Mattes, a spokesperson for the Pennsylvania-based Vanguard. "In fact, the unintended consequence of this seemingly well-intentioned proposal would likely harm shareholders in the long run."

Forcing fund companies to reveal how much their managers earn could make it difficult, Mattes said, to retain "high-caliber investment professionals," which, in turn, could erode returns and performance.

Some industry critics, however, believe that fund firms should be held to the same standards as public companies and disclose the salaries of top executives and fund managers.

"The companies may be private, but the funds are public and, therefore, portfolio managers' salaries should be disclosed," said Mercer Bullard, a former SEC staffer and a securities law professor at the University of Mississippi. *Reuters*

Bill Gates warns of 'mini-bubble' in Internet stocks

REDMOND, Washington—Microsoft Corp. Chair Bill Gates on Friday said that investors had created a "mini-bubble" by driving Internet stocks sharply higher.

"We are sort of back in a mini-bubble era in terms of people expecting a lot in terms of these valuations," Gates said. "But I don't think we'll see the same exit rate of companies that we saw back in the real bubble. There are some strong companies who are doing things right."

Gates, who was responding to a question about prospects for independent e-commerce companies, said Yahoo Inc., and online sellers eBay Inc. and Amazon.com Inc., had built critical mass and would continue innovating in the years to come.

"These people are there, they have an area of strength, a business model that lets them sustain themselves," said Gates. Yahoo is up against Microsoft's MSN online services unit.

Gates predicted that the boundaries between the Web companies would get "fuzzier" and that "healthy competition" between them would increase as the companies mature.

Shares of Yahoo, eBay and Amazon have shot up sharply since their lows of late March and April last year. By contrast, shares in Microsoft are up just 6 percent since bottoming out in June. *Reuters*

We're Moving Ahead

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CIGI TO UPGRADE PLANT IN STA. ROSA, LAGUNA

Consolidated Industrial Gases, Inc. (CIGI) is on the move to keep up with customers' gas supply needs when it upgrades its gas manufacturing facility in Sta. Rosa, Laguna. The plant will increase CIGI's capacity in addition to its main plant in Apalit, Pampanga.

A new investment for an additional on-site plant is also underway to further support CIGI's present capacity. A proof that CIGI continues to be the country's largest and most reliable industrial gas manufacturer in the country.

CIGI also provides expertise in safety and gas management solutions, and customized services to customers. Likewise, CIGI's extensive bulk tanker fleet is backed up by highly-trained personnel who are ready to serve customers 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. That's assuring our customers of product availability anytime.

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INVITATION TO REGISTER AND TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID FOR TRUCKING/HAULING SERVICES FOR NFA-NCR

The National Food Authority, National Capital Region, U.N. Avenue, Paco, Manila invites all interested qualified Trucking/Hauling Services Contractors to register, apply for eligibility and to bid for the hauling of 157,000 MT, more or less, of NFA imported rice from the NFA designated unloading terminals (South/North Harbor) to the different NFA-NCR warehouses located in Manila, Rizal and Cavite, with an Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) of Php27,168,200.00).

Application forms and list of requirements for registration may be secured from the RBAC Secretariat upon submission of a letter of intent and after payment of a non-refundable/non-transferable registration fee of P2,000.00.

Only applicants with Certificate of Official Registration as NFA Trucking/Hauling Services Contractors issued by NFA-NCR RBAC may apply for eligibility and to bid for NCR Trucking/Hauling Services.

The schedule of bidding activities are as follows:

	DATE	TIME
1. Issuance of Application for Registration/Requirements	– March 23, 2004 to March 30, 2004	8:00 AM - 5:00 PM
2. Deadline for Submission of Registration Requirements	– April 1, 2004	5:00 PM
3. Issuance of Certificate of Official Registration	– March 23, 2004 to April 2, 2004	
4. Issuance of application for Eligibility / Requirements	– March 23, 2004 to April 2, 2004	8:00 AM - 5:00 PM
5. Pre-Bidding Conference	– April 1, 2004	10:00 AM
6. Bidding Proper	– April 14, 2004	9:00 AM

The Application Forms to bid and list of requirements for eligibility may be obtained from the RBAC Secretariat after payment of a non-transferable/non-refundable bidding fee in the amount of P5,000.00.

Other inquiries may be addressed to the Office of the Assistant Regional Director, NFA-NCR, UN Avenue, Paco, Manila with telephone numbers 563-94-37 and 564-20-71 to 74 local 111.

THE NFA RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS THEREOF, TO WAIVE ANY FORMALITIES OR DEFECTS FOUND THEREIN, OR TO ACCEPT SUCH BIDS OR AWARD TO ANY CONTRACTOR WHOSE BID IS CONSIDERED MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE NFA OR TO THE GOVERNMENT.

(Sgd.) **ATTY. BASILIDES TACO**
Assistant Regional Director
Chairman, Bidding Committee

(PDI – March 23 & 29, 2004)

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE
BUREAU OF INTERNAL REVENUE
Bids and Awards Committee for Information Technology (BAC-IT)

2004

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Bureau of Internal Revenue is inviting interested firms to apply for eligibility and to bid for the **BIR Information Technology Outsourcing Initiative.** The procurement of and subsequent contracting for the I.T. services shall be in four (4) separate projects. The BIR wishes to bid out the first of the four projects, namely:

Name of Project	**A - Project and Contract Management**
Brief Description	Provide consulting, technical and management services necessary to assist the BIR in the implementation of the BIR IT Outsourcing Initiative, specifically including the monitoring and management of the service providers for projects B - Applications Development and Maintenance, C - Data Center Services and D - Data Entry Services.
Contract Duration	July 1 to December 31, 2004
Approved Budget	Php 22,000,000.00
Source of Funding	e-Government Fund.

Note that the winning bidder for Project and Contract Management will not be allowed to bid for the other three projects to be bidded out later.

Competitive bidding will be conducted in accordance with Republic Act No. 9184, otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act and its Implementing Rules and Regulations. The procurement shall follow the rules prescribed for Eligibility and Shortlisting of Consulting Services and Quality Based Evaluation Procedure.

Interested parties must submit their Letter of Intent to the undersigned on or before **April 12, 2004**. Those who have expressed their interest may secure the Eligibility Requirements Checklists and Forms from **March 22 to April 21, 2004** from the BAC - IT, Secretariat Rm. 302, 3/F Revenue Computer Center (RCC) Bldg., BIR Compound, BIR Road, Brgy. Piñahan, Diliman, Quezon City.

Deadline for submission of the eligibility requirements is on **April 22, 2004.**

Qualified local and foreign companies/outsourcers/consulting firms/service providers licensed to perform the I.T. services required by the BIR may participate in the Bidding if deemed eligible and are short-listed.

Pursuant to the IRR, only eligible and short-listed firms will be allowed to participate in the bidding process and obtain the Bidding Documents at the price of Php 4,400.00.

Pre-Bid Conference will be held on **May 12, 2004, Monday at 1:30 p.m.** to be held at the **Executive Conference Room, 3/F BIR-National Office Bldg., Brgy. Piñahan, Diliman, Quezon City.** The submission and opening of Bids will be on **May 24, 2004, Monday at 1:30 p.m.** to be held at the **Executive Conference Room, 3/F BIR-National Office Bldg.**

For particulars, please inquire from the BAC-IT Secretariat, thru the Chief, SSTMD-IPQS at Rm. 302, 3/F Revenue Computer Center (RCC) Bldg., BIR Compound, BIR Road, Brgy. Piñahan, Diliman, Quezon City or call telephone nos. 981-7085, 927-4104 (telefax), 981-7079 and 981-7088, or e-mail us at lilibeth.maranan@bir.gov.ph until **May 23, 2004.**

(Sgd.) **ATTY. LEONOR S. VILLALON-ROGERS**
Assistant Commissioner, HRDS
Chairman, BAC-IT

(PDI - March 22 & 29, 2004)

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE
BUREAU OF INTERNAL REVENUE
Bids and Awards Committee for Information Technology (BAC-IT)
Quezon City

2004

March 23, 2004

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) invites interested parties to apply for eligibility and to bid for:

Name of Project	:	**MOBILE SUBSCRIPTION FOR REVENUE OFFICERS FOR THE TAX COMPLIANCE VERIFICATION DRIVE PROJECT (Mobile RO)**
Location of the Project	:	**Bureau of Internal Revenue**
Contract Duration	:	**May 3 to December 31, 2004**
Approved Budget	:	**P10,002,500.00**
Source of Funding	:	**e-Government Fund**

All interested parties may obtain the bidding documents from the BAC-IT Secretariat, c/o Room 605, 6/F, BIR-National Office Bldg., BIR Road, Brgy. Piñahan, Diliman, Quezon City starting March 29, 2004, upon payment of non-refundable fee of P2,000.00.

A Pre-Bid Conference will be held on **April 1, 2004, Thursday at 1:30 p.m.**, at the **Executive Conference Room, 3/F BIR-National Office Building, BIR Road, Brgy. Piñahan, Diliman, Quezon City.**

Deadline for the submission and opening of eligibility requirements, technical and financial proposals shall be on **April 13, 2004, Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.**, to be held at the **Executive Conference Room, 3/F BIR-National Office Building, BIR Road, Brgy. Piñahan, Diliman, Quezon City** to be followed by the opening of the bids.

All particulars relative to eligibility process, bidding, evaluation of bids, post-qualification and award of contract shall be governed by the applicable provisions of Republic Act No. 9184, otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act and its implementing rules and regulations.

The BIR assumes no obligation whatsoever to compensate or indemnify the bidders for any excuse or loss that they may incur in the preparation of their bids. The BIR also reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive any of the required formality therein and accept the bids most advantageous to the government.

For particulars, please inquire from the BAC-IT Secretariat, thru the Chief, SSTMD-IPQS at Room 302, 3/F, Revenue Computer Center (RCC) Bldg., BIR Compound, BIR Road, Brgy. Piñahan, Diliman, Quezon City or call telephone nos. 981-7085, 927-4101 (telefax), 981-7079 and 981-7080 or e-mail us at lilibeth.maranan@bir.gov.ph.

(Sgd.) **ATTY. LEONOR S. VILLALON-ROGERS**
Assistant Commissioner-HRDS
Chairman, BAC-IT

(PDI - March 29 & Apr. 5, 2004)

Bicol University
BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE
Legazpi City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Bicol University thru its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) is inviting contractors for the bidding of the project: Repair & Improvement of Engineering Building II at BU Main Campus, Legazpi City with an approved budget (ABC) of P5,700,000.00.

The following schedule should be strictly observed:

1.	Deadline for submission of letter of intent (c/o Legal Office)	- April 6, 2004
2.	Deadline for submission of Eligibility Requirements (c/o Legal Office)	- April 12, 2004
3.	Start of Issuance of Bid Documents	- April 19, 2004
4.	Pre-bid Conference	- April 26, 2004, 9:00 AM BU Boardroom
5.	Submission & Opening of Bid	- May 6, 2004, 9:00 AM BU Boardroom

The Bid Documents, Plans and Drawings will only be issued to eligible bidders upon payment of a non-refundable fee of P________ at the Cashier's Office, General Administration Building, BU Main Campus, Legazpi City.

For further information, please call the Bicol University Legal Office at tel. no. (052) 821-7958.

The Bicol University reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive any formality or technicality, and to award to the bidder with the lowest calculated and responsive bid.

(Sgd.) **MR. RENATO G. HINGCO**
Chairman, BAC

(PDI - March 29 & April 5, 2004)

WWF

INVITATION TO PRE-QUALIFY AND BID

The KKPFI (WWF-Philippines), a duly registered non-government organization implementing the Northern Sierra Madre Natural Park Conservation and Development Project (NSMNPCDP)-Phase II, funded by The Royal Netherlands Embassy (RNE) is inviting interested contractors with IAC classification (not lower than Category Small B) on Dam and irrigation construction to pre-qualify and to bid in a public sealed bidding scheduled on April 28 and 29, 2004, for the construction and rehabilitation of the following communal irrigation projects (CIPs):

1. Maligaya CIP, Palana, Isabela
2. Dibulo CIP, Dinapigue, Isabela
3. Culasi CIP, Palanan, Isabela
4. Dimaluade CIP, Dinapigue, Isabela

The proposed work to be undertaken shall include the furnishing of labor, materials and equipment necessary for the construction and rehabilitation of concrete diversion dams and irrigation canals.

Pre-C forms shall be made available at the WWF-Philippines, NSMNPCDP Phase II, Liaison Office, Alvarez-Majan Bldg., Don Canciller Avenue, Cauayan City, Isabela upon submission of the letter of Intent and latest PCAB license not later than April 13, 2004.

Deadline for the submission of fully accomplished pre-qualification statement shall be not later than 5:00 p.m. on April 16, 2004.

1. Issuance of Bid/ Tender Documents (upon payment of non-refundable fee of P1,000.00)	April 19-20, 2004
2. Pre-Bidding Conference	April 23, 2004 (WWF-Philippines Liaison Office)
3. Deadline for Submission of Bids	April 28, 2004 (12:00 p.m.)
4. Opening of Bids	April 28, 2004 (1:00 p.m.) April 29, 2004 (8:00 a.m.)

The submission and opening of bids shall be held at the WWF-Philippines, NSMNPCDP Phase II, Liaison Office, Alvarez-Majan Bldg., Don Canciller Avenue, Cauayan City, Isabela.

The KKPFI (WWF-Philippines) reserves the right to reject any bids or all kinds or any part thereof, waive any defect or informality therein or to accept the offer most advantageous to WWF-Philippines.

JOSE MA. LORENZO TAN
President, WWF-Philippines

(PDI--March 24 & 29, 2004)

MACTAN CEBU
INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AUTHORITY
LAPU-LAPU CITY PHILIPPINES

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

1. The Mactan-Cebu International Airport Authority through its Bids and Award Committee (BAC) with office at Mactan, Lapulapu City, invites all interested bidders to register and to apply for eligibility and to bid for the Supply and Installation, including Test and Commissioning of One (1) 9/6.25 MVA, 69 KV Power Substation for the Mactan-Cebu International Airport, ABC in the amount of Twenty Two million Three hundred Four thousand Nine hundred Eight Pesos point Ninety Five Centavos (PHP 22,304,908.95).
2. Interested Bidders who may apply for eligibility should be:
   - a. Filipino Citizen with DTI Registered Business Name or SEC Registration Certificate whichever may be appropriate under the existing laws of the Philippines, with at least sixty (60%) percent of the outstanding capital stock belongs to citizens of the Philippines.
   - b. Has valid PCAB License, Specialty Electrical Contractor at Category Medium B Minimum
   - c. Capable of a Turn Key Basis Project (meaning the contract amount is payable in full Fifteen Days (15) after the date of completion, acceptance of the project. No mobilization Fee).
3. To be registered, interested bidders must submit the following eligibility documents (in case of photocopied documents, the original must be presented):
   - a. DTI/SEC Registration Certificate, Joint Venture Agreement whichever appropriate under the law
   - b. Mayor's Permit, Municipal License
   - c. Taxpayer's Identification Number
   - d. Statement of Prospective bidders that it is not "blacklisted" or barred from bidding by any government agency, office or corporation, including non-inclusion in the "blacklist" of contractors issued by the Construction Industry Authority of the Philippines (CIAP)
   - e. Valid PCAB License, Specialty Electrical Contractor at Category Medium B minimum.
   - f. Notarized affidavit certifying under oath that each documents submitted is an original copy or a true faithful reproduction or copy of the original
   - g. Contractor's record of experienced for the past 3 years, as *Main Contractor* of a 69 KV Power substation project - (Submit list of project w/ corresponding contract and Certification of Turn-over and Acceptance).
   - h. Audited Financial Statement for the last 2 calendar years stamped received by BIR
4. Submission of Letter of Intent with Eligibility documents in Two (2) copies will be on March 22 to 31, 2004. Distribution of Bid Documents will be on April 12 to April 19, 2004 at the BAC's Office from 9:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. Monday to Friday upon payment of a non-refundable fee of P11,000.00

   Pre-Bid Conference : April 24, 2004 at 9:00 A.M. at BAC Office
   Bid Opening : May 18, 2004 at 10:00 A.M. at BAC Office
5. The BAC reserves the right to reject any or all bids waive any defect of informality, assume no obligations whatsoever or indemnify to the bidders any expense of loss that it may incur in the preparation of its bid, and to accept the bid most advantageous to the Government. The R.A. 9184 and its implementing rules and regulations shall apply to this bidding process.
6. For more information, please contact the BAC Secretariat at telephone number 3402486 local 1461 or 2050.

(Sgd.) **ATTY. ROGELIO C. YAUN**
BAC Chairman

(PDI--March 22 & 29, 2004)

NOTICE OF CLOSURE

Notice is hereby given that the Representative Office of **JOHNSON CONTROLS HONG KONG, LTD.** in the Philippines has closed and ceased operations effective **31 December 2002.**

(PDI - March 22, 29 & April 5, 2004)

Job World 2004 highlights RP's primary business opportunity

THE country's primary business opportunity-information and communications technology, is one of the main focus points of JOB WORLD 2004, touted as the most awaited Job Fair to be held in the country.

Some 5,000 jobseekers are expected to troop to the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC) Forum (Tent) and match their skills and talents with some 50 exhibitor companies on a limited engagement run on April 2 and 3, 2004 from 10AM to 6PM.

In line with the government's efforts to focus on ICT (information and communications technology), which is the country's best bet to be in step with developed countries, Job World 2004 brings forward its very own Call Center Job Fair, a pavilion which consists of the country's top call center, which will open its doors to thousands of job opportunities to the potential skilled labor force of 29 million.

The Philippines presents a formidable stance to the dominance of India of the outsourced contact center market in Asia.

Other than the focus on Call Center, Job World also offers job opportunities from a wide variety of industries, namely in the insurance, manufacturing, telecommunications, services and other sectors.

Exhibitors who want to reserve booths at this grand job fair may contact Neotrade at 8129099 or 8123973 or e-mail at neotrade1@yahoo.com.

Also to be held in conjunction with the Job World 2004 Job Fair is a series of seminars which will be very useful for jobseekers and employers alike

The event is presented in cooperation with Job Market of the Philippine Daily Inquirer, and JOb Market Online of INQ7.net. Sponsors include Call Center Academy, Speechpower, PLDT My DSL, Mary Kay Cosmetics, PowerVision, Binondo Media Publication, Trabaho.com, I.T. Pros, Digital Filipino, Vantage, Café Puro, Magic 89.9, Wave 89.1, K Lite 103.5, Jam 88.3, 99.5RT.

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Republic of the Philippines
Province of Cebu

BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE
Cebu Capitol, Cebu City

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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Provincial Government of Cebu, thru its bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites all interested manufacturers, suppliers, dealers and/or distributors to apply for eligibility and to submit bids for the supply of various food requirements of jail prisoners at the Cebu Provincial Detention and Rehabilitation Center (PDRC) for the period of six (6) months starting **May 1, 2004** to **October 31, 2004**, with an approved budget of Php 4,637,336.00.

In order to qualify for participation in the public bidding, the bidders should conform to the eligibility criteria as prescribed under Section 23.6 of the approved IRR-A of Republic Act No. 9184.

Eligibility requirements and bid forms, tender documents and request for quotation shall be available at the BAC Secretariat, Provincial General Services Office, DepEd Bldg., Capitol, Cebu City, within the government prescribed office hours, starting on Tuesday, **March 23, 2004**, upon payment of non-refundable fee of One Hundred Pesos Only (Php 100.00)

Pre-bid conference will be conducted on Wednesday, **March 31, 2004**, 2:00 p.m., at the BAC conference room, Provincial General Services Office, DepEd Bldg., Capitol, Cebu City.

Sealed envelopes containing the duly accomplished eligibility requirements, technical and financial proposals shall be received by the BAC Secretariat at the above mentioned address not later than 2:00 o'clock in the afternoon on Monday, **April 12, 2004**, and shall be publicly opened thereafter.

All particulars relative to the eligibility process, bidding, evaluation of bids, post-qualification and award of contract shall be governed by the implementing Rules and regulations (IRR-A) of R.A. 9184, otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act.

The Bids and Awards Committee of the Province of Cebu reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to waive any defects or formality therein and to accept bids considered complying, responsive and most advantageous to the government.

For inquiry, please contact the office of the BAC Secretariat at Telephone Nos.253-9614, 253-3995 and 416-6065.

These requirements are posted at the BAC Bulletin Board, PGSO, DepEd Bldg., Capitol, Cebu City.

(Sgd.) **EDUARDO T. HABIN**
Chairman

(PDI- March 23 & 29, 2004)

High fuel prices weaken Opec resolve to cut oil production

LONDON—The plan of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries to cut oil production by 4 percent appears to be unraveling.

Opec members are beginning to ignore their self-imposed quotas to take advantage of high crude prices and meet the surging demand for oil in China and the United States.

Despite announcing two production cuts in six months, Opec has boosted its actual output to try to keep pace with the rising market.

Opec agreed last month to reduce its output ceiling by 1 million barrels a day starting April 1, in an effort to keep prices from tumbling during a seasonal lull in demand this spring.

As Opec representatives prepare to meet Wednesday to review the oil market, some are no longer treating next month's cut as inevitable and are suggesting instead that all options—even an increase in output—are now open.

That could portend cheaper and more plentiful crude, but it probably wouldn't be enough to comfort American motorists.

US gasoline prices have risen to punishing heights due mostly to a robust domestic demand, limited refining capacity and concerns about possible shortages in blending components for reformulated gasoline.

Some analysts say that any foreseeable increase in oil supplies probably wouldn't translate into bigger gasoline inventories in time for the peak summer driving season.

Crude prices have risen by about US$6 a barrel since Opec announced its latest cut on Feb. 10.

US prices have bumped uncomfortably close to the psychologically important threshold of US$40, though they've backed off somewhat in recent days on evidence of a build-up in crude inventories.

"You'd have to be a complete idiot to cut production when prices are at these levels," said Adam Sieminski of Deutsche Bank in London.

Excluding Iraq, which doesn't participate in the group's quota agreements, Opec has pumped an estimated 26 million barrels a day so far in March.

The logistics of reducing crude shipments now would make it impossible for the group to comply with its new ceiling of 23.5 million barrels even if it wanted to, said Leo Drollas of the Center for Global Energy Studies in London.

Costlier crude is now a political issue in major importing countries.

White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card urged Opec this week to increase its production and said the Bush administration would be talking to its "allies" in the group to ensure that they kept supplies flowing.

Opec's 11 members supply about one-third of the world's oil.

The group's president, Purnomo Yusgiantoro, told reporters this week that Opec would discuss three possible strategies when its delegates meet Wednesday in Vienna, Austria: trimming the output target as planned, leaving it unchanged at its current level of 24.5 million barrels a day, or raising it.

Purnomo's newfound flexibility attests to the mixed signals coming from the oil market.

Although crude prices are high, some analysts insist there is no real shortage.

They point instead to futures markets, where an unusually large number of "long" positions have helped drive the market upward.

A long position is one in which a trader pays a fixed price for a paper contract of crude in the expectation that prices will rise and let him cash in his contract later for a profit.

At the same time, many analysts—including those at Opec—foresee an excess in physical supplies of crude this spring.

Purnomo predicted that global demand for oil would fall by 2.5 million barrels a day in the second quarter.

Wary of a consequent plunge in prices, Opec announced preemptive cuts in its output ceiling in September and again, six months later, in February.

However, the unexpected strength in demand from China and the United States has eroded Opec's resolve to follow through on either cut.

"I'm very confused now—the market is also very confused," Qatar's Oil Minister Abdullah bin Hamed al-Attiyah said this week.

One possible result would be a decision to postpone the planned decrease in Opec's production ceiling.

Obaid bin Saif Al-Nasseri, oil minister of the United Arab Emirates, earlier this month said that Opec might need to reconsider its decision to lower the ceiling, though he later backtracked and said a postponement was just one idea among many. *AP*

US urges China to adopt flexible exchange rate

WASHINGTON—Treasury Secretary John Snow on Friday urged China to adopt a flexible exchange rate policy.

In a meeting with China's Central Bank Governor Zhou Xiaochuan at the Treasury Department Friday, Snow "reiterated the US view that the international trading system works best with free trade, free flow of capital and flexible market-based exchange rates."

"Secretary (Snow) commended the efforts underway to modernize China's financial markets and he urged the governor to continue those reforms," Treasury spokesperson Rob Nichols said in a prepared statement after the one-hour meeting.

On Thursday, Snow called on China to float the yuan as fast as possible. China's exchange rate has become important politically in an election year, as the recovering US economy has continued to shed manufacturing jobs as it imports Chinese goods. *AFP*

Bankrupt US telephone firm cuts 4,000 jobs

NEW YORK—Bankrupt telephone company MCI on Friday said it plans to cut 4,000 jobs, citing the need to reduce costs because of increased competition and the impact of a regulatory crackdown on telemarketing.

The Ashburn, Virginia company said the cuts amounted to about 7 percent of its workforce. It also plans to shut down three call centers in Denver, Phoenix and Niles, Ohio.

Jobs from other areas in Alpharetta, Georgia; Colorado Springs, Colorado; and Springfield, Montana will also be eliminated, the company said.

"As a result of the impact of federal and state 'Do Not Call' laws, as well as ongoing telecom market trends, we need to take this action in order to improve our overall cost structure," the company said in a statement, adding it will have little impact on customer service.

US regulators made it illegal for telemarketers to call phone numbers placed on the National Do Not Call Registry since last October.

MCI has also strongly opposed the Do Not Call list, arguing that it would make it more difficult to lure customers away from their existing local phone providers.

The Do Not Call list has devastated some companies that rely on telephone marketing. Scholastic Corp., the US publisher of the Harry Potter books, earlier this month blamed the registry in part for its wider than expected loss.

MCI's cuts are a part of a cost reduction plan that it announced in January. MCI is expected to slash costs by 15 to 20 percent this year.

A spokesperson said the cost cutting program is ongoing.

MCI, formerly known as WorldCom, is expected to emerge from bankruptcy in April. Saddled with a heavy debt load, the company has attempted to sell off assets.

Its former chief executive Bernard Ebbers has pleaded innocent to federal charges that he orchestrated an $11-billion accounting fraud, the largest in US history. *Reuters*

IMF clears $1.34-B loan for Brazil

WASHINGTON—The International Monetary Fund on Friday said it cleared a $1.34-billion loan installment for Brazil, but said the country indicated the money was not needed and would not be drawn.

The IMF said its board completed the sixth review of Brazil's performance under a $40.2-billion stand-by credit arrangement.

"The Brazilian authorities, however, have indicated that they do not intend to make any further drawings on the arrangement," the IMF said in a statement.

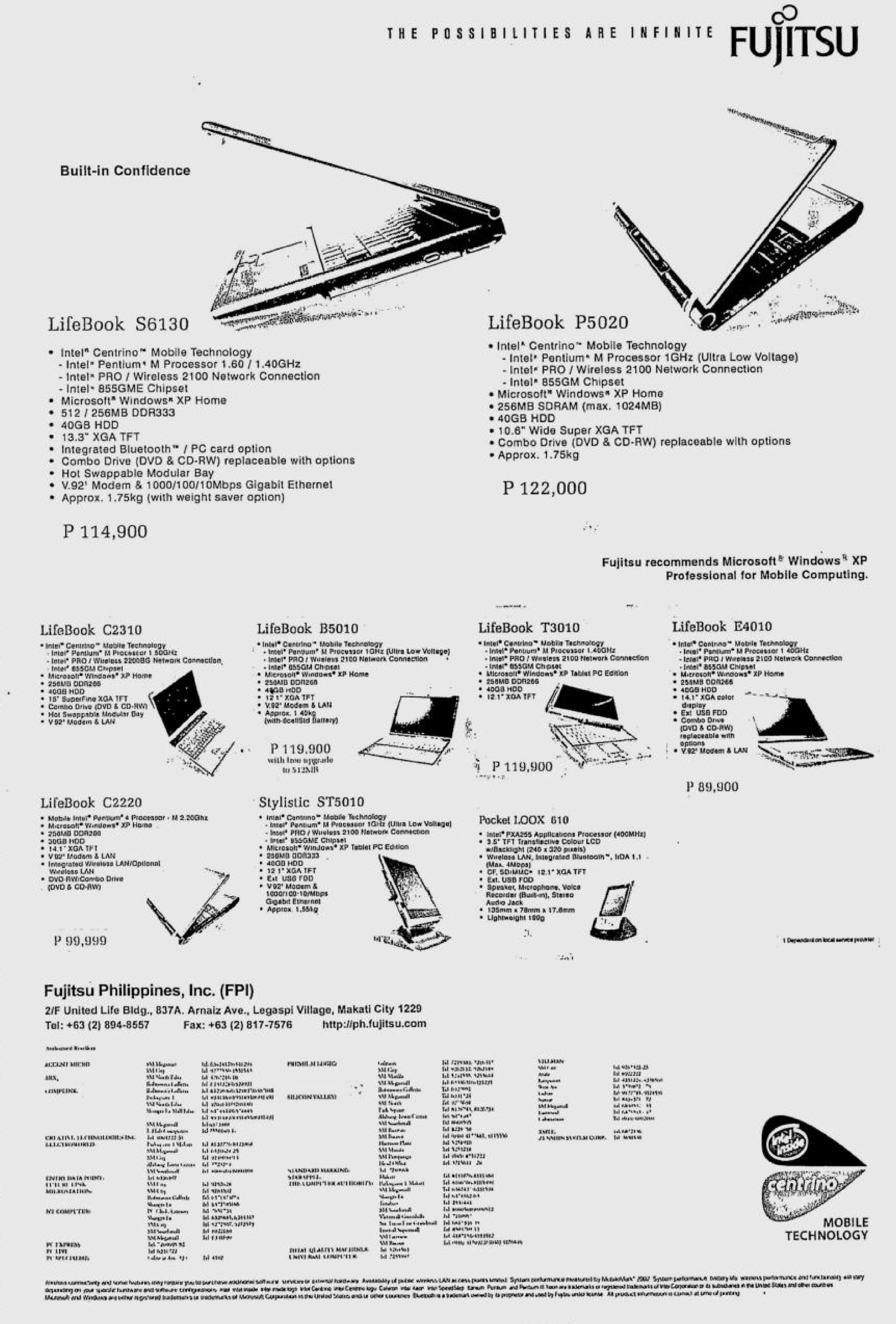
Anne Krueger, acting managing director of the IMF, said Brazil's economy is performing well under President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, with the biggest IMF credit in history a cushion.

"The Brazilian economy is poised for robust economic growth this year," she said.

"The recovery of growth owes much to the sound economic policies pursued by the government.

"The solid fiscal outturn in 2003 and the government's commitment to a strong fiscal stance in 2004 have ensured that debt dynamics remain on a steady downward path.

"The cautious response of monetary policy to the monthly inflation rates seen over the past three months has been appropriate and demonstrates the authorities' commitment to ensuring that inflation hits the mid-point of the target range in 2004," she added. *AFP*



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— Psalm 42:8

RUBEN QUINTO BELTRAN

March 29, 1914 - March 27, 2004

Two days away from his 90th year, **Ruben Quinto Beltran** joined his Creator with the same quiet dignity that marked his life on earth.

His children and grandchildren, **Agnes** and **Jagdeep**, **Vinay** and **Nikhil**, **Dee** and **Teymour** (deceased) and **Jim**, **Yusef** and **Shareef**; **Sr. Fe Emmanuel R.A.**; **Vic**; **Rose** (deceased) and **Aki**; **Chuchi** and **Mel**, **JP** and **Kit**; **Bambi** and **Mon**; and **Myra** and **Mario**, celebrate his long and fruitful life and request prayers from everyone.

Friends and family are invited to participate in Holy Mass every evening at Funeraria Paz Araneta Ave., Quezon City. A memorial tribute to celebrate his birthday will be held after the mass on the 29th of March.

There will be a mass on the 31st of March at 7:00 a.m., thereafter, interment will be at Eternal Garden Quezon City.

"The dark background that death supplies brings out the colors of life in all its purity."
George Santayana

ROSALINDA C. AGUINALDO

Passed away in the Grace of our Lord
on 27th March 2004

Leaving behind children **Nonnie**, **Margot**, **Vicky** and **Cherry**, nine grandchildren and eighteen great-grandchildren.

Her ashes lie in state at Mount Carmel Shrine Mortuary, Doña Juana Rodriguez Ave., New Manila, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Tuesday, March 30, 2004 after the 9 o'clock a.m. funeral mass at Mt. Carmel Shrine.

PLEASE OMIT FLOWERS

I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. John 14:6

"There is an appointed time for everything,
and a time for every affair under the heaven..."
Ecclesiastes 3:11

Emilia Yango De Jesus

January 6, 1923 - March 27, 2004

Husband : **PETE S. DE JESUS** (†) former President Pro Tempore Manila City Council;

Children : **MARITA & TONY** (†), **BABY & JOSEPH, FLOR & BING, DODOY & CYNTHIA, TERS & MARILYN**;

Grandchildren : **JOHANNA & MIKE, KOKO & MYLA, JOMARI & JOEY, JAY & HEIDI, JEFF & JANIS, JILL, DANYELLA & BINGGOY, HAZEL & MARK, JAY, KAREN & VICTOR, TISHA & PAMELA, JP, NENE & JOHN-JOHN**;

Great Grandchildren : **TIMMY, GABRIELA, MARILY, NATALIE, ZOE, REESE, MIGGY, ELLE & SHON**; brothers: **MARIO & FRANCISCO** request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at Arlington Memorial Chapels (Felicidad), 12 G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Saturday, April 3, 2004, after the 9:00 a.m. Mass at the Manila Memorial Park, Sucat, Parañaque City.

An obituary with a picture can be a fitting tribute to your departed loved one.

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ATTY. NACIANCENO "KIDDY" G. RICO

Peacefully joined His Lord and Saviour
on March 24, 2004 at the age of 81.

His loving wife **MERCEDES GADONG RICO** of Tapaz, Capiz;

His children **DR. MERNA R. LOPEZ, ATTY. REX G. RICO, MARY ANN R. JAMANDRE, MARY JOY G. RICO, APRIL DREAM R. TEODOSIO, RAY G. RICO, ENGR. ROY G. RICO, MERCY CHERYL R. LOREÑA, DR. MC ARTHUR G. RICO, NANCY ROSE R. PELOPERO**, and **FERNANDO JOSE G. RICO**;

His sons and daughters-in-law, grandchildren and relatives request all his friends and colleagues to pray for the eternal repose of his soul. His body lies in state in St. Joseph the Worker Parish. Mass and interment will be held on Saturday, April 3, 2004 at 2:00 p.m. at Forest Lake Memorial Park, Mandurriao, Iloilo City.

CARD OF THANKS

We, the children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, brothers, sister and other relatives of the late

ROSARIO LAHOZ TONGSON

Who died on March 14, 2004

convey our heartfelt gratitude to all who paid their last respect, offered masses & prayers, sent flowers, contributed financial support, donated to the Craniofacial Foundation of the Philippines, kept vigil, attended the funeral rites and comforted us in so many ways during our time of bereavement.

My God bless you for your thoughtfulness and generosity.

DEATH NOTICES

PACIFICO SALDE CABA

Passed away in the Grace of our Lord
on Wednesday, March 24, 2004 at the age of 64.

His remains lie in state at his family residence at 209 Ermin Garcia St., Cubao, Quezon City.

His remains will be cremated on Tuesday, March 30, 2004 after the 9:00 a.m. Mass.

He will be buried at Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina City.

JOSE V. BELLEZA

of Goa, Camarines Sur

Peacefully joined our Creator
on March 25, 2004.

His remains lie in state at La Funeraria Paz, Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Cremation rites will be on March 31, 2004 at 4:00 p.m.

'For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.' John 3:16

BENJAMIN M. MARTINEZ

Died on March 26, 2004
at the age of 80.

His bereaved wife Norma; children Ana and Cholo, Badette, Charlie and Sherill, Dennis and Ellen, Evelyn and Jun, grandchildren Aikee, Joey, Aira, Addy, Charlene, Janeee, Deejay, JD, Gerby, and Abby and other relatives request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His body lies in state at Chapel Q, Loyola Memorial Chapels, Guadalupe, Makati

Interment will be on Thursday, April 1, 2004 at La Loma Cemetery, Caloocan after the 9:00 a.m. Mass at Chapel Q.

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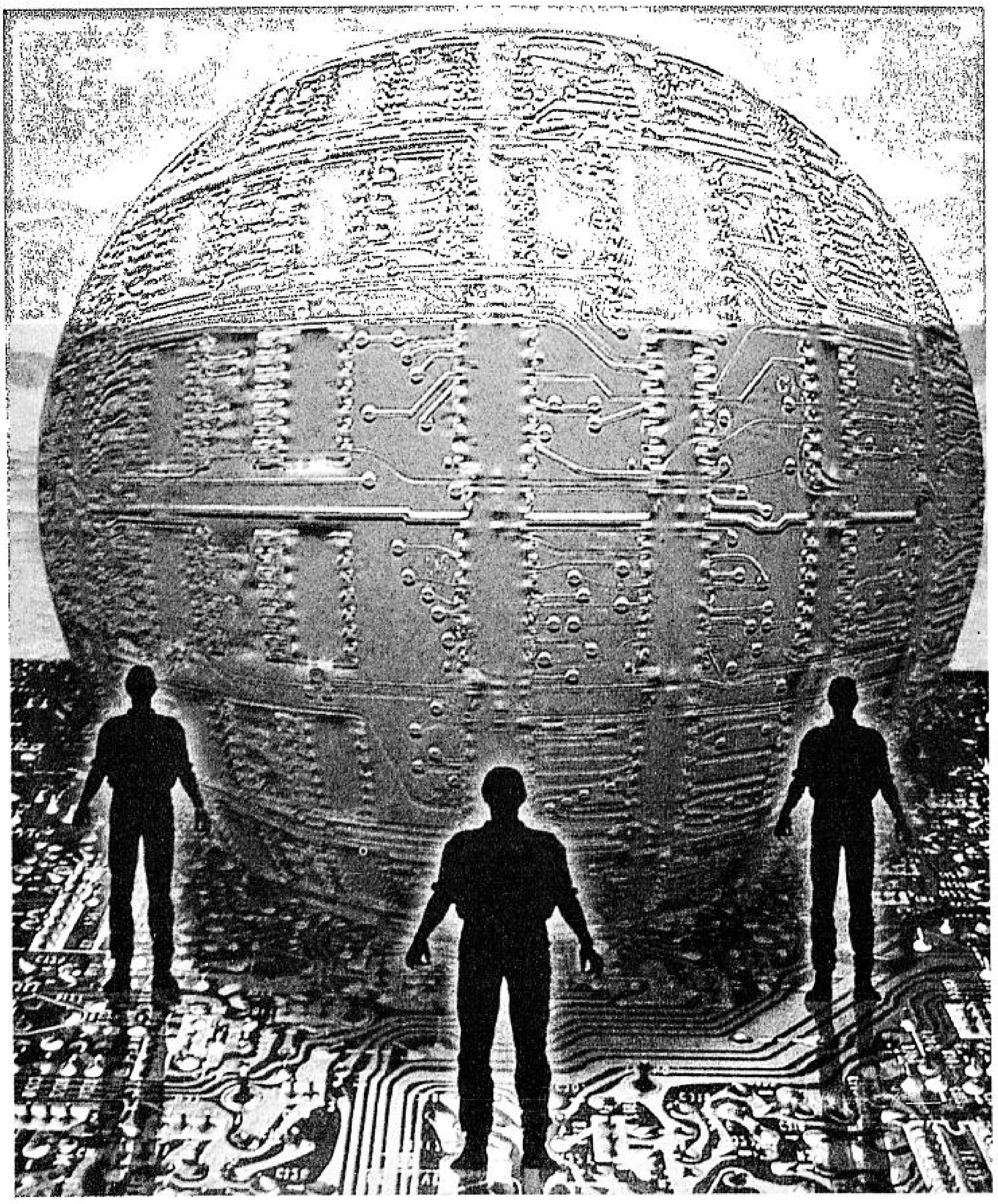
Editor Leo Magno

Looking back at 10 years of Internet in RP

By Alexander F. Villafania



SPECIAL REPORT

TODAY marks the 10th anniversary of the Internet in the Philippines, and few people could remember how this technology was born in the country.

For those who do remember, the Internet was considered a paradox; something that appeared to be nothing more than a fad that would eventually pass into oblivion. Perhaps because the Net was highly technical whose mysteries were unraveled only by geeks. Perhaps it was because no available application was yet in existence to make the Internet a practical tool. Besides, back then, the telephone was a good enough communication medium, and the pager was still king of mobile messaging. Nonetheless, it was telephone technology that became instrumental in bringing the Internet to the Philippines.

PHNet gets the credit for being the first Philippine organization to ever connect to the World Wide Web via the traditional PABX network. Since then, entrepreneurs, techno-geeks and just the plain curious flocked to see what interesting things the Internet could do for them, and ultimately for the country.

Like many things in our country, the history of the Internet in the Philippines also has its share of glorious moments and ugly controversies as issues continue to unfold about the Philippine Internet every now and then.

And incidentally, what started out as a technical eureka for a few has become somewhat of a utility for some Filipino households and businessmen. Now you have about a dozen prepaid Internet cards for home use, peer-to-peer downloads, Web chatting, online banking, online gaming like Ragnarok, virtual private networks and online content services. In fact, there were a few times not so long ago when the Internet was used as a tool for multi-level marketing schemes—or scams, whatever you might want to call it (remember Powerhomes?).

'Grandfather's' thoughts

One who deserves to be called a progenitor of Internet connectivity in the Philippines is Mozcom president William Torres, who many consider as the "grandfather of the Internet" in the country.

Torres was already familiar with the Internet business in other countries long before the coming of the Internet here. A former National Computer Center (NCC) director, Torres worked closely with former Science and Technology Secretary William Padolina, Rodolfo Villarica and other Philippine Internet visionaries to bring the Internet to the country.

"Back then, we didn't even know what the Internet would be used for when it first came out. It didn't have any practical purpose. But we felt that its usefulness would come later and that it would grow big in the Philippines," Torres reminded himself.

For Torres, the first few months of the Internet was deemed as the domain of highly technical experts and those in the academe. It was an alternative to the more expensive telephone and fax communication system because it was cheaper and it connected to the schools in the United States where many educational institutions have already started digitizing a lot of data. Torres said that the commercial business side of the Internet was not even part of the idea yet, although he knew this would later catch up.

For all practical purposes, the Internet did bring the business and government sectors together. Businesses became more productive as their products and services were brought to a wide range of markets, both local and abroad.

There were online businesses like BayanTrade, Yehey!, and DFNN. "Cybercities" cropped up in Eastwood, Fort Bonifacio, Makati and Alabang, with more still in development. The growth of the call center industry required the even larger bandwidths, with PLDT, Globe Telecom and Eastern Telecom providing the largest investments to keep up with the demand.

Mary Anne Tolentino, president of the Philippine Internet Commerce Society (PICS), said that the next big step for the Internet now is through mobile applications. In a sense, she could be right. With more than 20 million mobile phone users in the country versus about 4 million Internet users, it would be a surprise if none of the ISPs, online entrepreneurs and even the telcos would not see the benefits of getting people to go online through their mobile phones.

"If you could get these 20 million users to access the Internet via their cellular phones, it would be a great advantage to the business community," she said.

Fernando Contreras Jr., one of the founding members of the Philippine Internet Service Organization (PISO) and one of the few who saw the birth of the Internet in the Philippines, has the same ambitious approach. To him, e-mail had almost replaced the outdated Telex. He also knew that firms would eventually use the Internet as a business tool.

But beyond the business aspects of the Internet, JR, as he is fondly called, thinks of the Internet as a great equalizer among smaller entrepreneurs and the large corporations. In this case, the Internet was the battleground for ISPs and the telecommunication giants.

"We saw the possibility of small companies getting to compete on a level playing field with the giant legacy telcos. It was great while it lasted but the overambitious and aggressive public capitalization model lacked core business fundamentals and the David-versus-Goliath battle ended without a good fight. In those years you could raise millions of dollars by just having a good marketing pitch," Contreras said.

Still, the idea of challenging the telcos didn't stop Contreras from pursuing head on. With another technical genius, Miguel Paraz, Contreras set up Iphil, another ISP, less than year after the Internet was born. Later on, the company was bought and merged with PSINET.

If we are to refer to history, there are many times that the Davids of Philippine Internet had clashed with only one Goliath—PLDT. One of the most celebrated cases is the phone-metering scheme that the telecommunications giant wanted to be implemented in 1997. A year later, the Philippine League of Democratic Telecommunications, Inc (PLDTi) was formed to combat the metering scheme. Both PLDT and PLDTi fought it out on the phone-metering scheme until the NTC dumped PLDT's plans. This prompted the telco to charge PLDTi and its founder, Gerry Kaimo, allegedly for Web-squatting since PLDTi used the "www.pldt.com" domain. PLDT and PLDTi's case is one profound example of how effective the Internet is as a level playing field.

Internet as utility

On the other hand, Jim Ayson's view of the Internet, as another pioneer of the Philippine Internet, is nothing close to being spectacular. The self-proclaimed "deviant" of the technology society used to see the Internet as a techie's play ground, until the advent of home computers. Now the Internet is more of a utility or commodity and there are few things now on the Internet that he says excites him.

"It was more exciting back then. There were so many things to do on the Internet because everything had to be done the hard way, like writing codes and making them run on the Net. Today, people can't work because their Internet server is acting up. Or students can't do research because they've relied so much on the Net that they have forgotten to go to the library," he said.

Still, Ayson does not discount the fact that the Internet is an important tool for society at large. Nor does he deny that the Internet would forever be integrated into our daily lives.

"Of course, there are still some exciting things to do about the Internet and I'm sure there will be more," he said. "But whether we like it or not, the Internet would gradually become a major part of our society."

Ayson's last statement could well be the motherhood statement for most people who are living and breathing in the Internet society. There hasn't been anything else in the Philippines that has brought so much changes to the government, the educational system and the way companies conduct their business. If the last 10 years were exciting enough for many, anyone could speculate what the next 10 years could bring.

Pinoy PC game wins award at int'l gaming tilt

By Erwin Lemuel G. Oliva

A FILIPINO-MADE PC game called "Anito" bagged the "best audio" award in the recently concluded Independent Games Festival in the United States last week.

Developed by local startup Anino Entertainment, Anito made it to the top 10 finalists for the best overall PC game category by an independent game developer.

However, Anito and the rest of the finalists lost to American developer Savage, which won this year's coveted award. This disappointed some finalists, according to Gabby Dizon, game developer for Anino.

"Some people were disappointed to hear that Savage won it because they had a huge listed budget of $1 million to $1.5 million," Dizon said.

The contest was open to all independent game developers worldwide.

Ateneo Business School offers online registration

By Alexander F. Villafania

THE ATENEO Graduate School of Business (AGSB) in Makati recently invested P5 million for its Online School Management System (OSMS) that allows virtual course management for students of the school's MBA programs.

The system is composed of an online registration system, grade reports and an online payment system through BPI Online.

Alberto Buenviaje, executive director of the Ateneo-Regis MBA program, said the system helps streamline the registration system for students who are more familiar with queuing up at the registrar's office and the cashier during the registration season.

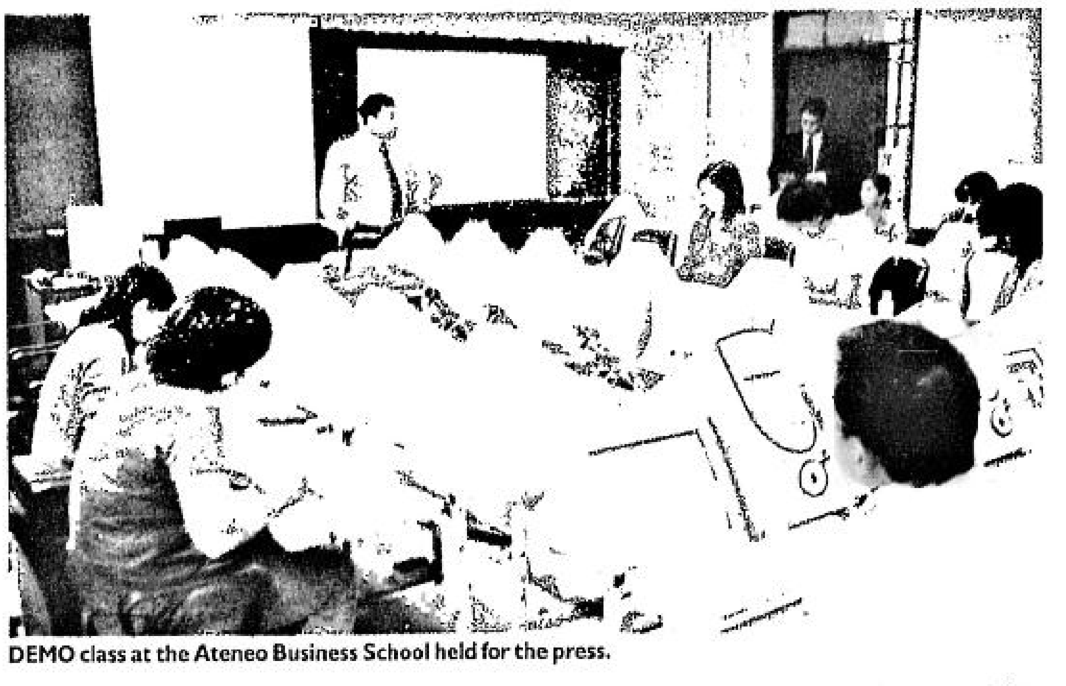
Aside from its Makati campus, the OSMS can also be accessed by its sister campuses in Laguna, Subic and Cebu. Eventually, the system would also be used by Ateneo's Information Technology Institute and the Ateneo Law School.

The school has already implemented online purchasing of some of its books, which could either be in digital or physical form.

Through the OSMS, the faculty could generate paper-intensive reports in real time. These reports include class lists, attendance, assignments and transcript of records. Other functions include adding or dropping subjects, adjusting available slots and grade submissions.

The OSMS is part of the school's P20-million budget for the modernization of the Ateneo educational system. The school aims to create an effective online learning system that would allow MBA students to take their studies beyond the classroom.

The school has also embarked on a Mixed Mode Learning program that offers core subjects online and through face-to-face methodologies. The goal, according to Buenviaje, is to expedite the learning ability of the students without burdening the students, who are mostly working professionals.



DEMO class at the Ateneo Business School held for the press.

According to Mennem Arecid, one of the MBA IT professors, the school would still want to ensure that the classroom system would be part of all their curriculums.

"Nothing takes away the efficiency of teaching and learning in a classroom because the physical interaction has more benefits."

Subjects being offered through the OSMS include Managerial Accounting, Marketing Management, Operations Management, Quantitive Methods and Strategic Management.

Microsoft makes source codes available to RP government

By Alexander Villafania

IN ONE of its rarest and boldest moves, Microsoft has finally opened up the source code of some of its products to the Philippine government.

Through a new project called the Government Security Program (GSP), Microsoft would allow the full disclosure of the sensitive source code for Windows XP, Windows Server and Windows CE to the government.

Initially, four government agencies would be part of the security and technical working group for the GSP, namely the Philippine National Police (PNP), the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), the National Computer Center (NCC) and the Presidential Management Staff (PMS).

According to Mark Yambot, Microsoft Philippines head of government programs, the four agencies have set up their own security teams that would be trained for the next several months on the use of the Microsoft source codes.

"The GSP would allow the government to implement security features into their networks. It's also essential that Microsoft lets the government see the nuts and bolts of its products to ensure transparency," he said.

Incidentally, Yambot said the program entails practically zero cost to the government.

"It's Microsoft who would be spending for this because we have to put in place our own security teams and the facilities that would be used," he said.

Yambot noted that about 70 percent of the Philippine government's server-based networks are using Windows.

The government's access to Microsoft's source codes would also allow it to look at potential bugs that could attack their Windows-based networks.

The government could also build and customize their own applications depending on their needs. It would not have to buy Microsoft's other products.

On the other hand, Yambot also noted that the GSP would constitute and strengthen trust between the company and the government, particularly because of the nature of the source codes, which is among the most coveted among underground hacker societies.

According to Yambot, the government should be the one enforcing non-disclosure agreements with members of their technical teams.

"We trust that the government would take steps to prevent the codes from leaking," Yambot said, in connection with a controversial leak of partial Windows NT and 2000 source codes to the Internet almost two months ago.

The Microsoft GSP is a worldwide program that is already being conducted in about 25 countries, including those that are part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (Nato).

The GSP was created to defuse fears that companies like Microsoft were a threat to national security, bearing in mind the malicious attacks it has received.

Opening a program during an MS Powerpoint presentation

By Jerry Liao

IF you need to execute an application during your Powerpoint presentation, simply follow these steps:

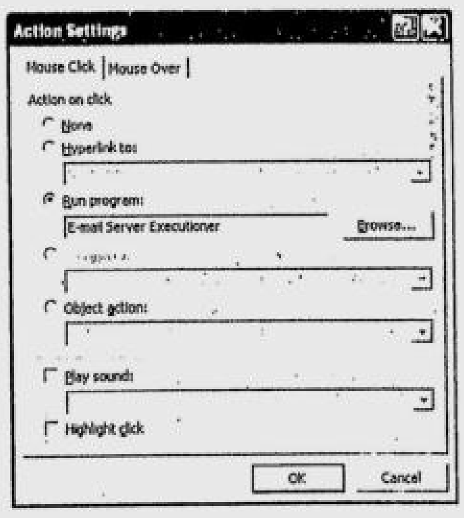
1) Open your MS Powerpoint presentation.

2) Create or insert an object that you want to click on to open the program.

3) Go to "Slide Show / Action Settings."

4) You will be asked to save your presentation, click "Yes."

5) Click on the "Run program" radio button, then browse through the application you want to open.



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Sun: 64-bit chips to drive server software development

By Alexander F. Villafania

THE AVAILABILITY of 64-bit chips is expected to eventually spur the development of applications that are capable of utilizing 64-bit computing, a Sun Microsystems executive said.

Robin Johnson, product marketing manager for Sun's server series, said that software manufacturers would eventually move to develop more robust applications that can run beyond the 4-gigabyte (GB) memory limitation of current 32-bit server processors.

"Eventually, the requirement for 64-bit processing will drive the need for applications to utilize further than 32-bit processing in areas such as encryption, data compression/decompression, 3-D graphics, modeling analysis, simulations, etc.," Johnson said.

In addition, Johnson said that a growing number of data being produced by Internet communities in both the wired and wireless space would also spur the development of more powerful software, thus, the need for 64-bit computing.

"More precision is needed to cater for such demand growth and complexity. I may be as bold to say that the server market has gone 64-bit," Johnson said.

Currently, very few server-platform applications have 64-bit capabilities, most of which are database software.

A 64-bit environment allows data to run faster between peripherals, say between a scanner and a PC. In the case of a 64-bit chip, it could receive and deliver larger chunks of data commands to other peripherals connected to it.

On the other hand, most software are written in 32-bit codes. Software manufacturers contend that they would have to rewrite the codes in 32-bit applications if they want to move up to 64-bit computing.

Sun recently launched a new line of servers that incorporates the AMD Opteron, currently the most powerful server processor in the market.

AMD's competitor Intel, along with several manufacturing partners, developed the Itanium series of processors, which are the world's first 64-bit processors for the x86 platform. Sun itself has been manufacturing 64-bit Sparc chips since the '90s. However, this is the first time Sun has utilized a 64-bit chip outside of the Sparc family.

Media, tech firms partner for multimedia poll coverage

By Alexander Villafania

MEDIA networks and technology firms on Friday formalized their partnership for a multimedia coverage of the upcoming May 10 elections.

Broadcast network firm GMA-7, the Philippine Daily Inquirer (PDI), the Catholic Media Network (CMN), the Philippine Council for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ), New Media Inc. (NMI), INQ7 Interactive Inc. (INQ7.net), AMA Computer University, the Philippine Long Distance and Telephone Co. (PLDT) and Smart Communications on Friday signed a memorandum of agreement (MOA) for a partnership dubbed "Eleksyon 2004."

Jessica Soho, acting news director for GMA News and Public Affairs, said that the partnership aims to provide the widest, most comprehensive and up-to-date news coverage of the upcoming elections.

"We'll use every available medium to deliver the news and results of the elections using traditional TV, radio and print, then expand it to the Net and mobile phones," Soho said.

According to Soho, information gathered through reports from GMA-7's TV and radio coverage and the INQUIRER would be delivered via the Internet and through SMS.

INQ7.net shall act as the Web-facilitator for the coverages, concurrently running up-to-the-minute news about the elections.

In addition, CMN's assistance would be available in areas that are not accessible to GMA-7 or the INQUIRER.

"CMN has broadcast radio members that are in places where GMA-7 and INQUIRER are not present, and they would provide the news in these areas," Soho said.

Meanwhile, the communications facilities of PLDT would serve as the backbone for the content transmission between GMA, INQUIRER, CMN and INQ7.net.

Smart Communications would be the SMS and MMS (multimedia messaging system) content provider.

On the other hand, PCIJ would provide in-depth training for GMA-7 and INQUIRER reporters covering the event.

"It's important that people get correct and timely information about the elections. It will be our job to ensure that the right information is delivered by the reporters," PCIJ executive director Shiela Coronel said.

AMA Computer University has also committed more than 15,000 student volunteers that would serve as assistants to various polling stations. These volunteers would also feed information directly to GMA-7, which would act as the headquarters for Eleksyon 2004.

Starting election day, Soho said their TV news broadcasts would be partially enhanced to accommodate information from TV, radio stations and news articles.

Raymund Sarmiento, chief technology officer of NMI, said the enhanced TV interface would be similar to what the US-based Bloomberg TV is offering.

New Sony Ericsson products

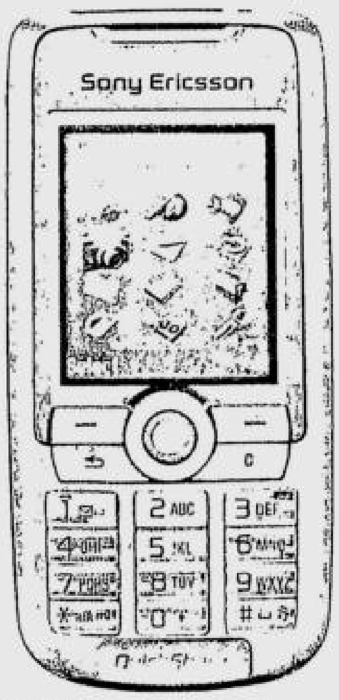
SONY Ericsson unveiled new mobile imaging products and accessories designed for users who demand robust features in mobile multimedia messaging.

Among the new offerings is the S700 camera phone with QuickShare and swivel opening design. This features an integrated 1.3 megapixel CCD digital camera for high quality photos and a 2.3-inch 262K TFT color screen to display digital quality images. Compatibility with Memory Stick Duo extends the memory capacity of the S700 to fully support new styles of mobile imaging.

Another new product is the K700 camera phone, featuring the latest in imaging, multimedia and entertainment functions. The camera features 4x digital zoom and as many consumers use their camera phones in dark environments, such as nightclubs or cafés, the Photo Light feature can be enabled to improve image quality.

Meanwhile, the MMV-100 accessory allows users to send images from a mobile phone to a large screen via Bluetooth wireless technology. This is a perfect tool for people who want to share images and audio in a fast, hassle-free way. It plugs directly into a television set or a digital projector where images from camera phones can be presented or viewed.

Images from one to several mobile phones can be directly transferred to a television set or digital projector using Bluetooth through its "many-to-one" connectivity, wherein several people can use phones to transfer images to one screen. In addition, MP3 or AMR audio files can also be transferred through Bluetooth.



THE SONY Ericsson K700 features dual front interfaces; one for the mobile phone features and another for a true camera look and feel. This idea is moving closer to a design-language inspired by Sony's digital cameras. The camera can zoom up to four times digitally. The phone also has a Photo Light feature that enables images to be taken with more quality when taken inside dark places.

Other accessories newly introduced are the HBH-600 Bluetooth headset, Bluetooth Car Handsfree HCB-300, the Advanced Car Handsfree HCA-200, the lightweight Portable Handsfree HPS-20, and the Active Case IAC-25, which can be attached to the user's arm, belt or bag.

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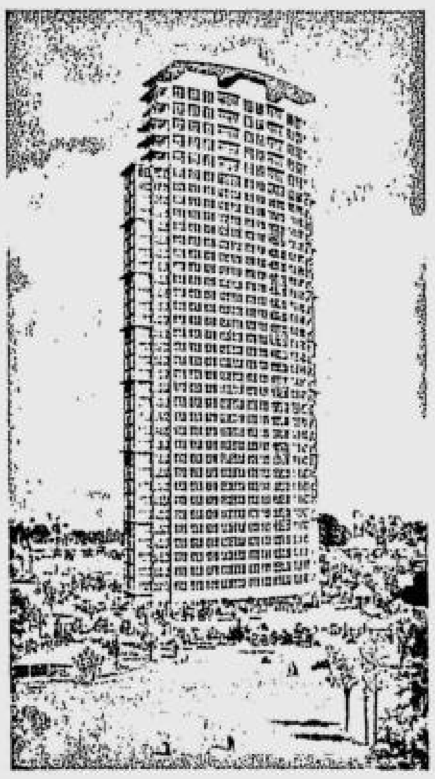

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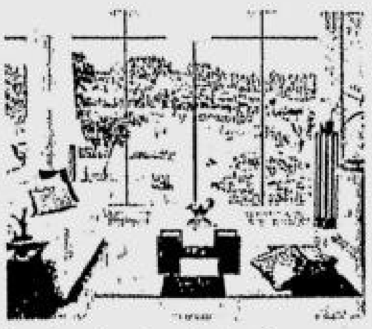

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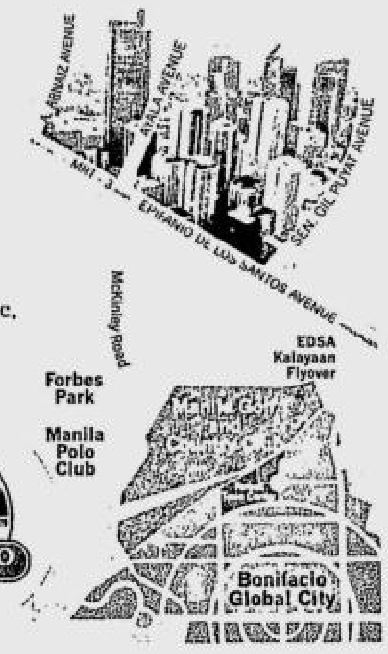

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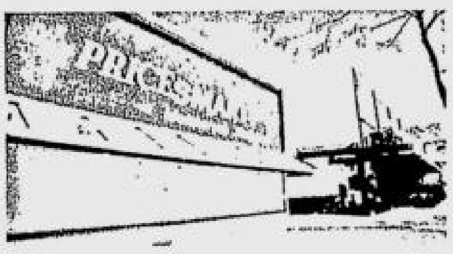

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NOT INTO POLITICIANS' POCKETS

Ways to ensure the budget goes to the people

By Dennis M. Arroyo
Contributor

PUBLIC money is supposed to be spent on projects that serve the public good. In reality, huge sums are lost to political agenda, corruption, and inefficiency. How can the people fight back to reclaim their funds? Politicians use the budget to strengthen their power, so budgeting is ultimately a political exercise. They can be pressured, because they are sensitive to votes.

Here then are some "social accountability" mechanisms being used around the world.

Budget making

One mode of intervention is to help prepare the budget.

To research on budget priorities, IDPA in Dhaka, Bangladesh runs surveys in the slums, letting respondents allocate 100 coins among different sectors.

The Canadian Center on Policy Alternatives drafts an alternative budget which is presented to the government.

Porto Alegre City in Brazil involves the citizens in drafting its budget. The city harmonizes the interests of the various sectors, who are each competing for a larger slice.

It convenes meetings with representatives from different sectors. The delegates rank their demands from 1 to 5.

Participatory budgeting has led to dramatic fiscal and welfare improvements in Porto Alegre. For example, tax revenue has risen by almost 50 percent every year, households served by the sewerage system have almost doubled, the number of children enrolled has doubled, access to water services is almost universal.

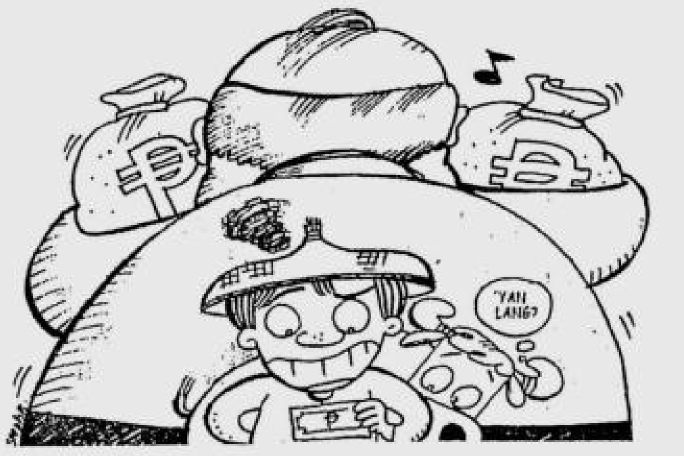
More than 80 cities in Brazil are now copying Porto Alegre's participatory budgeting example.

Budget analysis

A second path is to analyze the budget prepared by the government.

The Institute of Public Finance in Croatia publishes a wide-circulation newsletter on the draft government budget. Most often, such groups utilize the mass media.

An example of city budget analysis is the work of the St. Petersburg Strategy Center. Budget analysis can be brought down even to village government. At the very least, villages and towns can pressure their local officials to release the details on the budget.



DISHA in India uses special software to look closely at the budget to determine its impact on the poor.

There are some interventions that look at the impact of the budget on certain sectors. Examples include the Gender Budget Initiative of Tanzania and the Children's Budget Project of IDASA, South Africa.

Briefing papers

Just releasing the data is not enough: the data must be made understandable to the public. The data may be overwhelming for the ordinary reader. They may engulf media professionals themselves, leading them to write erroneous articles. The major conclusions of budget activists are simplified for the media so readers will grasp the patterns buried in a mass of data.

For example, the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) in Kenya feeds budget information to the people and helps them understand the impact of the budget policies.

DISHA produces briefing papers 4-5 pages long. They are simplified further into the 1-page vernacular fact sheets for rural villages.

One option is to put the full budget analysis report and tables on the website, then e-mail the mass media an easy reading summary of the highlights. Another is to release the report in stages, according to topic.

DISHA's briefing papers are sent to legislators, cabinet members, and key officials of the bureacracy. They are confrontational in tone, meant to push officials into offering explanations.

Reports on budget analysis quickly follow the publication of the draft budget. DISHA coordinates its briefing papers with assembly discussions on the budget.

Indian politicians have written DISHA to thank it for the aids to budget analysis. More than half of the recipients use the briefing papers the day after they were released. In Israel, members of the Knesset often refer to the budget analysis reports published by the Adva Center.

Making a national or city budget is clearly a field entangled in jargon, Greek to most people. It is thus important that academic groups transfer the technology to the NGOs that advocate the interests of the poor. Movements like CIDE in Mexico run training seminars to promote budget literacy. It is new ground for participants as they are not used to heavy funding analysis or very large sums.

Tracking expenditures

A third path is to monitor how the budget's funds are spent.

In Mexico the President spent a secret fund without having to account for it, until the group FUNDAR threw the issue into the halls of public debate.

The government in Rajasthan, India originally withheld budget information to the activist group MKSS. So the NGO presented its research findings on ghost payments direct to the villages. The effect was explosive. The people fought with sit-ins lasting 52 days, forcing the local officials to release the information.

There is a lesson to be learned there. Researching on corrupt spending, and sharing the findings with the public are not enough. They should be combined with community mobilization. The people should be organized for demonstrations to express their collective outrage. *Comments to darroyo@philonline.com*

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Selecting a president - II

(This article reflects the personal opinion of the author and does not reflect the official stand of the Management Association of the Philippines.)

THE CLUSTER of education, experience, and self education should include:

- Educational attainment
- Government executive experience
- Running a business
- Self education

When we review the educational attainment of the presidential candidates, Gloria Arroyo would take the top spot. The official website of the Office of the President, Gloria Arroyo "was valedictorian of her high school class at the Assumption Convent, was consistently on the Dean's list in Georgetown University in Washington D.C. and graduated magna cum laude at Assumption College. She obtained an MA economics from the Ateneo de Manila University and a doctorate degree in economics from the University of the Philippines."

Having been lucky enough to be sent to college and graduate school by my parents, I too tend to be an intellectual snob and have a tendency to look down on school drop-outs.

But formal education is not every thing. Bill Gates was a college drop-out and look at where he is now. William Shakespeare also had to drop out of school at 14 and his English was not so bad!

FPJ was not so lucky. His father was bitten by a dog and Ronnie (that was his nickname) had to work for a living not just for an education. He helped his family survive without their father.

MAPping THE FUTURE

Manuel A. Alcuaz Jr.

Government executive experience is important. Here is where Gloria Arroyo has the edge. Roco has had his baptism of fire in the Department of Education and Lacson has been PNP chief. FPJ and Villanueva have no government experience.

But business experience could be just as important. FPJ has had significant business experience in running FPJ Productions. He has learned to satisfy customers and make the payroll on a regular basis, something that some of his rivals have not learned to do. Roco ran a law firm and Villanueva runs a fairly successful church congregation.

With rapid changes in business, economics, and technology, it's not what you learn in school that counts. It is your continuing self education that counts.

Wisdom, knowledge, skills

All the knowledge in the world will be of little help to the future President, unless he or she developed the skills to make use of that knowledge and that of other people.

The President we elect should be good at:

- Setting objectives
- Prioritizing and focusing
- Choosing people
- Listening to people
- Deciding
- Leading and inspiring

While some intellectuals are good at articulating too many objectives, it is important to set a few objectives and really focus on them. FPJ says that he will focus on helping the poor, regaining the people's trust, and eliminating graft from the top. If he could just do that, we would have a great president. Roco focuses on free education in public schools and the eradication of graft and corruption.

President Macapagal does not seem to know what to concentrate on. Her priority seems to be to have her picture posted in all places and to appear on radio and TV. She thinks that distributing PhilHealth cards is governance.

A president that is not too brilliant might be better at surrounding himself with cabinet members and advisers who are more intelligent, more experienced, and more accomplished than him.

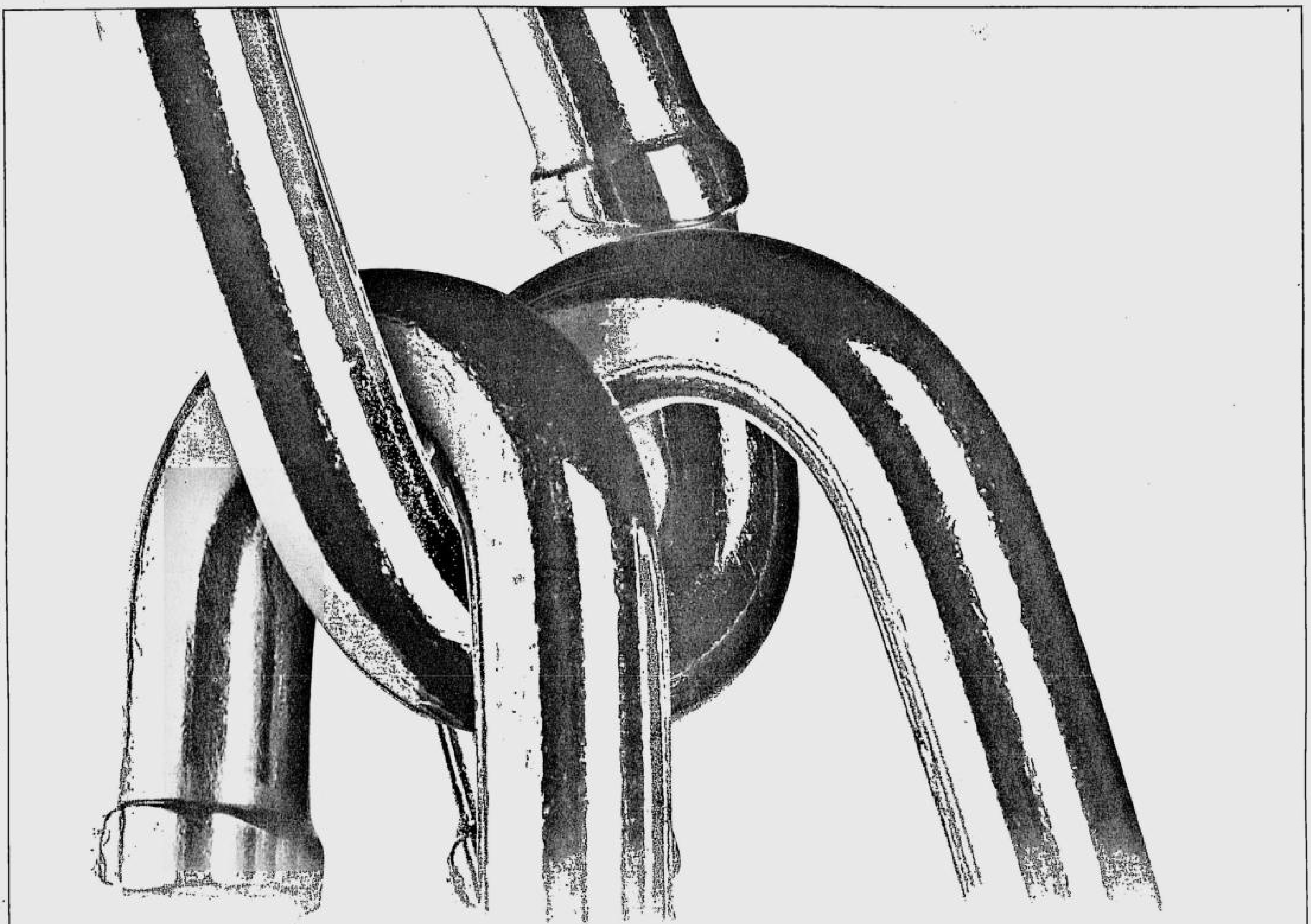
Sometimes brilliant people have a fear of being overshadowed. Look at how Roco selects his vice presidential mate. Make a superstar a University Dean or President and you may find out that eventually no one more brilliant than him would remain in the faculty.

A president does not have to be superior in all respects. He should, however, be good at getting people who can make up for his deficiencies.

While intelligence and education helps in decision-making sometimes, it leads to having a closed mind.

A good leader and a good president must be able to listen to the different elements of our society, not just the people around him and those who like him. Listening requires self confidence and humility. Proud and insecure people do not listen.

SELECTING/B2-4



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Look out for the qualities of a creative seller

By Myrna Rodriguez-Co
Contributor, UP ISSI

GROWING YOUR BUSINESS

CREATIVE selling. Creative marketing. Creative advertising. Creative product development. Have you noticed how the modifier "creative" has been misused and abused in the field of marketing?

Sales people are always urged to use creative selling techniques for example. They are taught how to know the product thoroughly, prospect for new customers, open contact, present the merchandise, handle objections, close the sale, etc. But if you look closely, the techniques are laid down too pat. Almost SOP. Often something you can memorize. And so you ask, what do all these remotely have to do with being creative?

What is creativity

In the first place, what does being creative imply?

Creation in the metaphysical sense is building from nothing ... as in God created man. But in the context of us, the created trying to create, it is enough that the technique, solution or innovation demonstrate "newness" or recombine known elements into something new and imaginative. And in the end, it must add value.

Creative selling, of course, begins with a creative seller. For small shops, who cannot hope to compete with the big stores in terms of product assortment, price and promotion, having creative and effective sales people is their one possible competitive edge.

Sales persons must, first of all, believe that they are innately creative. There will be resistance here as the stereotype of the creative person is the artist, the writer, the poet. They must hark back to the natural curiosity, originality and ingenuity that they exhibited—and all people did—as toddlers and pre-schoolers. These are, alas the same gifts, we progressively lose as we learn to conform as adults.

Qualities

Aside from having thorough product knowledge and the basics of product presentation, overcoming objections and closing the sale, the creative sales person must have the following personal qualities:

- Judgement—common sense, maturity, intelligence. He knows that it does not pay to argue with a customer, for example. And that the shop should never be criticized in front of customers.
- Tact—Having a sense of what to say and do even under fire. A child accidentally drops an expensive crystal. It breaks. The sales person tells her: "That is worth a thousand pesos. Go fetch your mother" and she happened to be standing behind the sales person. She bristles of course. Could it have been handled more tactfully?
- Attitude—A good attitude means having a positive view of customers, merchandise and the business itself. And of one's job, of course. It means willingness to accept suggestions, to continuously improve, to learn. It means not being afraid of work.

Store owners must be warned that bad attitude is contagious. One single sales person with a poor attitude can spoil the whole crew.

Observing sales people

The creative behavior that shop owners look for is not easy to pin down. Let us hear it from various owners as they draw from their experiences training and observing their sales people:

- The most creative of my salesladies do not say: "Is there something else." She makes positive suggestions. When the customer buys a set of curtains, she asks what about curtain racks? Or table runners or doilies that complement it." She tells customers it might save them another shopping errand.
- My most outstanding salesman answers objections by throwing it back to the customer. "Why do you feel the dress isn't 'you?'" " Do you have suggestions so we can get the right merchandise?" "Why do you think the appliance is not durable?" He listens and even takes notes when the customer comments and criticizes.
- When customers look for something our store does not carry, they keep a record of these items. We ask them to tell them to come back in a few weeks, with an assurance it will be on our shelves by then.
- A sales girl I have instinctively knows when customers are looking for a bargain. She leads them to lower-priced items or the bargain shelves. Conversely, she has the gut feel for the status-conscious ones. She suggests the name brands.

WATCH/ B2-4

AIR FRANCE'S NEW DAILY FREQUENCY

Attaining another milestone in its expansion history

2003 saw the celebration by Air France of seventy years of high-flying ambition and expertise. Since its inauguration on October 7, 1933, the Company has continued to develop a strategy of constant innovation. This proactive policy has helped the carrier expand and upgrade, boosting it to a leadership position among the world's foremost airlines.

Here in Manila, Air France launched its maiden flight from Paris 53 years ago on December 9, 1949 with 14 passengers aboard a Douglas DC-4. Since then, it was operating between the two cities on non-daily frequencies. Beginning 29 March 2004, Air France flies daily to Paris via Bangkok with swift connections to main cities in Europe and beyond. Providing a tremendous boost to the airline's connecting capability is the Paris-Charles de Gaulle Airport. This Paris-based hub of Air France offers premium passenger services and an unmatched connecting network that serves as a gateway to countries all over the world. Currently, the CDG hub ranks ahead of all other European airports in terms of connecting flight possibilities.

Together with its partners in the powerful SkyTeam alliance, Air France maintains an extensive international network servicing over 500 destinations in 114 countries. At present, the Alliance comprises six major airlines: Aeromexico, Air France, Alitalia, CSA Czech Airlines, Delta and Korean Air, each a leader in its natural market.

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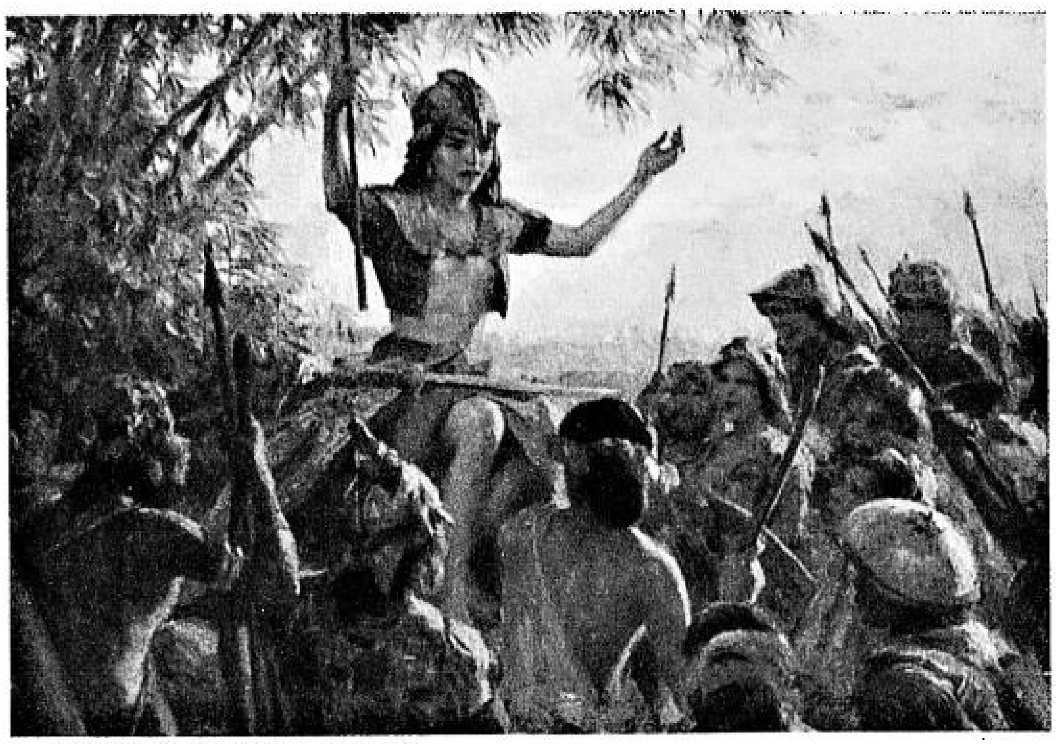
Top auction houses call RP art 'excellent investments'

By Rico Hizon
Contributor

APRIL is art month in Singapore and the focus is on the biggest regional art exhibition called Art Singapore and the Christie's, Sotheby's and Larasati auctions for Southeast Asian Art.

In this first installment of a two part series on Philippine art as an investment, I spoke with art experts of two of the world's biggest auction houses Christie's and Sotheby's and asked if Filipino and global art collectors are staking their money on Philippine art? Who are the bankable artists? And where are their prices now?

Sotheby's Mok Kim Chuan and Christie's Keong Ruoh Ling Lim both agree that Philippine art is now being considered an excellent investment, and this is evidenced by the brisk sales both houses generated at previous auctions in Singapore and Hong Kong, respectively.


FERNANDO Amorsolo's Princess Urduja

At the Christie's auction last October for example, the star attractions—Bencab's Brown Brother's Burden and Anita Magsaysay-Ho's Banana Vendors-lived up to expectations as both works fetched prices beyond the estimates.

The 1972 Bencab acrylic on paper, estimated at $19,000-$26,000 (P1.06-1.45 million, was eventually sold for more than double at $54,000 (P3 million).

Magsaysay-Ho's 19 x 15 inch oil on canvas, meanwhile, also sold at twice the price at $84,000 (P4.7 million). Its price was initially pegged at $28,000-$41,000 (P1.57 million to 2.3 million.)

While at Sotheby's, Felix Resurreccion Hidalgo's La Parisienne, a 21 x 36 inch masterpiece sold for $217,000.00 (P12 million).

With demand for Philippine art on the way up, Christie's and Sotheby's are increasing the number of works of Filipino artists at their upcoming auctions.

Christie's Ruoh Ling believes that Bencab, Nena Saguil, Anita Magsaysay-Ho and Vicente Manansala's works are growing in stature in the international art auction market. In recent auctions, their prices have more than doubled.

And they are not only gaining recognition among Filipino collectors but also with buyers from other Southeast Asian countries, and this she say's adds more depth to the collector base of Filipino art.

While Sotheby's Mok notes that Manansala, Fernando Amorsolo, Elizalde-Navarro, Anita and Bencab are very "auctionable" artists. He calls these artists "recession proof." Whether global economies and markets go up or down, the price of their works will remain stable.

He also said that the awareness for Filipino artists has grown tremendously through the years, and will eventually catch up with the popularity of their Indonesian, Balinese and Vietnamese counterparts in the region.

Both art experts agree that the market is very mature and discerning, with collectors only responding to very good pieces. And demand for Philippine works is pretty high in auctions because prices are still very attractive compared to local (Philippine) market prices.

In their upcoming auction this April, Christie's will highlight 18 artworks from 10 masters including Anita Magsaysay-Ho, Bencab, Vicente Manansala, Federico Alcuaz, Onib Olmedo, Victorio Edades, Galo Ocampo, Nena Saguil and Fernando Amorsolo.

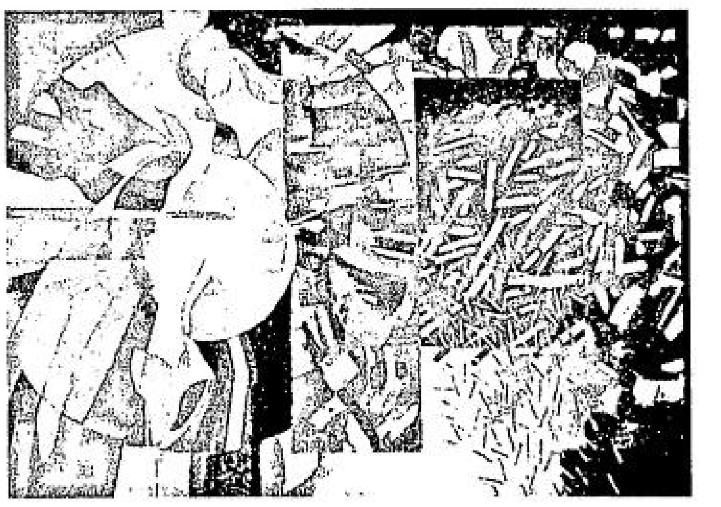
Sotheby's, meanwhile, will feature 24 works from various Filipino masters like Fabian de la Rosa, Fernando Amorsolo, Vicente Manansala, Arturo Luz, Jerry Elizalde Navarro, HR Ocampo, and Jose Joya.

Christie's said Anita Magsaysay-Ho's "1995 diptych Six Senses" and Vicente Manansala's "1962 Juan Luna's Blood Compact" will be the highlights of their auction. Both pieces have been described as exceptional representations of the artists' works.

While Sotheby's said Fabian de la Rosa's 1920 piece Doing Laundry and Fernando Amorsolo's Princess Urduja dated 1959 are rare pieces that will likely captivate art watchers.

If you would like to find out more about the Filipino art works on auction, you can log on to *www.christies.com* and *www.sothebys.com*.

Next week, tips on where to find bargain artworks in the Philippines.


MODERN artwork by Jerry Elizalde Navarro

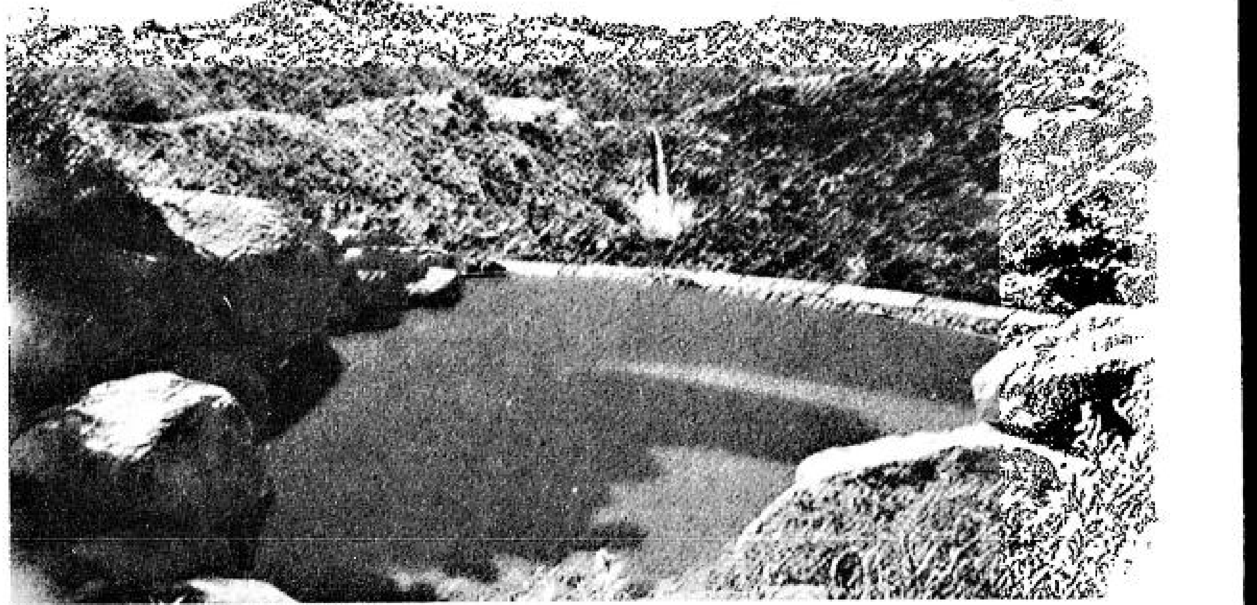
Watch out for the qualities . . .

From page B2-3

- In some stores, the smiles of the sales staff seems pasted. The "good morning's" seem rote and insincere. In my store, they look at the customer in the face, smile and greet them. They are sensitive to their needs. They observe whether the customer needs or even appreciates assistance. They sense if the buyer wants to browse alone and leave them be.
- In our store, we do simulation exercises. Everybody has the chance to play customer in the same way they can play sales person. We try to internalize how it feels to be in the shoes of a buyer. This has made us more responsive sales people.
- In our shop, our sales people are discouraged to flatter. To say indiscriminately that a dress becomes a customer is a "no no." But they are encouraged to do so, simply but with a smile, if they sincerely believe that a garment does something for the customer.
- In a meat shop, every time we have a new product, we have it for snack. That way, our sales staff knows what to answer when customers asks them whether the product is good. It would range from "*ok naman po*" to "*napakasarap po.*"

In the end, one goes back to judgment, maturity, tact and attitude, backed up by training and product knowledge. With all these in their arsenal of qualities and tools, sales people cannot help but sell "creatively."

(A seminar on creative selling techniques will open at the UP ISSI on April 17. Call up Tel. 9287076 to 70 or e-mail info.issi@up.edu.ph)


HELICOPTER view of Las Haciendas

Selecting a president - II

From page B2-2

When I was officer-in-charge of Pag-ibig after Edsa I, I was surprised to find out that I had to sign the appointment papers of new employees to be hired in Zamboanga!! I felt that the manager in Zamboanga was in a better position to make the decision, and that he should be responsible. Such decisions should not be passed upward to avoid accountability.

Centralization of decision-making

There is something very wrong with the way the Philippine government is run. There is too much centralization of decision-making and responsibility and there is insufficient delegation and empowerment.

In the US, Cabinet Secretaries call the shots in their departments. For many years, Henry Kissinger defined and implemented US Foreign Policy.

This is one reason why many of us think the President should be a super brain to be able to make all key decisions. That is wrong. A President should not make all key decisions. His key skill should be the ability to choose the right people for key government positions. And to remove them when they do not perform.

A President is like an orchestra conductor or a college dean. He does not play the music nor does he teach the classes. He should, however, be good at getting good musicians and good faculty.

FVR was a very intelligent and hardworking President. Unfortunately, sometimes he was not satisfied with just being the conductor. He tried to be a musician as well. He traveled frequently and conducted important trade negotiations. Since he was at the forefront, he gave away too many concessions and as a result, many of our economic problems today are due to FVR's doing the job for his economic and trade team.

On the other hand, President Macapagal has not done a very good job in her recent appointments to the Comelec, or in her failure to remove incompetent and corrupt appointive officials.

Platform

Finally, we go to the issue of platform. A comparison of platforms would require a separate article.

The President has been in office for almost three years and it is not clear what her platform is. Lately, she has come up with almost a dozen new give-away programs. If these programs were really important and good, why only now? Is she merely trying to fool the poor people? Giving away land titles, education loan forms is not governance.

A simple platform focusing on enforcing the rule of law, eradicating graft and corruption and providing a level playing field for business is all that is needed for our country to recover.

Roco and Lacson estimate that 20 percent of the government budget is wasted in graft and corruption. The damage of corruption is not only in spending too much. Corruption causes economic damage.

Our garment industry is moving out of the country because of corruption in the Department of Labor. Industries are moving out because labor arbiters take ridiculous positions against business expecting to be bribed.

The 20 percent estimated loss to corruption is perhaps the average. In some cases the loss is closer to 100 percent as in the case of Comelec's computerization project. I believe that while Abalos and company are primarily responsible for this waste of the people's money, the President however is not innocent.

Last year, we told the President that the Voters Validation System being cooked up by Abalos and Tancangco would be a waste of money. She said she would stop it. She did not. As a result, P1 billion went down the drain and into some people's pockets.

For Phase II on Automated Counting, P1.3 billion was budgeted. Apparently close to P850 million was remitted by letter of credit. The Supreme Court voided the contract because the Comelec waived its own qualification requirements to favor MegaPacific e-Solutions, its preferred vendor. Even after the Supreme Court decision, Abalos appeared adamant to implement partial computerization. Why? I wager that would make it hard to reclaim the P800 million and to find some way to spend the remaining P500 million.

The sad state of our society is exemplified by the reactions we got when we filed the TRO against Comelec before the Supreme Court. People told us we were wasting our time because graft and corruption is a given. They even expected the Supreme Court to be bought! Thank God we still have a Supreme Court that believes in the rule of law.

I believe that Gloria cannot stop corruption because she cannot lead by example. She can only pretend to fight corruption but sadly under her leadership, corruption has continued. She has compromised with inept and corrupt officials in order to gain political support.

(The author is president of Systems Sciences Consult Inc. Feedback at mapsec@globenet.com.ph)

If you can't get OPM, land will do

By Margie Quimpo-Espino

ONE of the smartest ways to start a business is to use other people's money (OPM).

But if they don't have cash, land will do.

The proponents of Phoenix Land Inc. raised money for its development venture by pooling their land assets, and borrowing against these.

They then used the money and started creating "haciendas" and selling property at P2,000 to P2,300 per square meter, a stone's throw away from another development that sells at P10,000 a sq. m.

Phoenix is owned by Danny Antonio, president of Land Excel Consulting Inc. and part owner and developer of Canyon Woods; Ricardo S. Pascua, former president and CEO of Metro Pacific Corp. and Fort Bonifacio Development Corp.; Celedonio A. Pile, president and CEO of Excore Inc. and other minority shareholders.

The common denominator between the three is that all claim they are self-made men who did not have rich parents to bankroll their ventures.

Pascua recalls when First Pacific (mother company of Metro Pacific) started investing heavily in the Philippines, and he and PLDT president Manuel V. Pangilinan arrived, the "hacienderos" were raising their brows and asking who their parents were.

"Manny's dad at least was a bank president. My grandfather was just a fisherman and my father was a simple man," Pascua states. He adds, however, that Philippine society gave him the opportunities to achieve what he did. He was able to go to Ateneo for college and proceeded to AIM for his masteral degree.

Today he is paying back by setting up a scholarship for college students.

Antonio is some kind of protegé of taipan Henry Sy. He was adopted by a Chinese couple and taught the language. He grew up learning about entrepreneurship in the markets of Divisoria. He studied at La Salle.

LAS Haciendas boasts of waterfalls

Pile says he comes from a modest family but his father invested in education. He also finished at the Ateneo.

Phoenix was actually born out of an opportunity presented by the Sy-owned Banco de Oro, which also tapped Antonio to help develop its land bank.

Its first project is a resort farm facing Taal Lake and volcano. It signed up a venture with Green Square Properties Corp. for a 117-hectare property in Laurel, Batangas. The project is called Las Haciendas, a resort-farming community. Green Square is owned by lawyer Romy Roxas who has amassed huge properties in Batangas and Quezon.

Project cost for Las Haciendas is P800 million which will have five clusters in 10 years. Pile says they have already sold most of the lots under Phase I.

The buyers were mostly friends of the proponents, putting pressure on them to do good as they would initially rely on word of mouth of the first buyers to market the place.

The average lot size at Las Haciendas Resort Farms is 1, 000 sq. m.

The site has two waterfalls but one is set to be revived after studies are completed on what caused it to stop flowing and how it could be made to run again, Pile says.

For the second phase, their come-on is buyers get a pony when they buy a lot.

RICARDO Pascua and Donnie Pile

DANNY Antonio

Largest 'kesong puti' produced in Nueva Ecija

By Anselmo Roque
PDI Central Luzon Desk

SCIENCE CITY OF MUÑOZ—Add one more to the growing list of the biggest whatever.

This time, it's "kesong puti" (white cheese) from carabao's (water buffalo) milk.

No record for this kind of cheese exists in the Guinness Book of World Records but the Philippine Carabao Center, which prepared the kesong puti, lacked the time to apply for it.

The white cheese was 4 feet wide, 16 feet long and 2 inches thick. It was presented on Thursday to the public during the start of PCC's 11th anniversary celebration.

The cheese was later served to all those who joined the celebration.

Used to produce the cheese, according to Dr. Daniel Aquino, coordinator of the PCC water buffalo gene pool dairy project, were 800 liters of fresh milk, 16 grams of rennet powder and 18 kilograms of salt.

An eight-woman team, led by Ms Mina Padilla-Abella, PCC milk processing in-charge, spent 25 hours to produce the cheese at the PCC gene pool dairy plant here. The milk was bought from dairy farmers who were paid P35 a liter.

Aquino said the procedure for making the cheese included the following: pasteurization of the milk, curd formation by adding an enzyme coagulant (rennet) to produce the curd, cutting of the curd into small pieces, salting, transferring of curds into the mould, and draining.

The giant cheese produced here was equivalent to 1,250 pieces of market-size cheese.

"It was not for show nor for the record that we had in mind when we planned for this giant cheese," Dr. Libertado Cruz, PCC executive director, said.

"It was to highlight the importance of the white cheese as one of the milk products that provide income to the dairy farmers."

Incidentally, kesong puti, whose production technology has been transferred from generation to generation from its origin in Sta. Cruz, Laguna; San Miguel, Bulacan, Cebu, and Samar, appears unique in the world.

The closes to it is the paneer in India and the soft white and creamy cheese of Bulgaria.

Cruz said the PCC has been promoting the production of white cheese to dairy cooperatives and families.

The other milk product produced by PCC here is mozzarella cheese but this is for the highend market and requires sophisticated machine to produce.

MEMBERS of the dairy project of the Philippine Carabao Center in the Science City of Muñoz put on finishing touches on the biggest "kesong puti" (white cheese) produced.

'Sugar and more!' is theme of Negros Pana-ad festival

"SUGAR and more!" Negros Occidental's tourism slogan comes alive during the celebration of Pana-ad sa Negros Festival from March 27 to April 4, 2004 at the Panaad Park and Stadium in Brgy. Mansilingan, Bacolod City.

Now on its 11th edition, the Panaad festival will focus on sugar and rice, the traditional industries of Negros Occidental that remains its major economic pivots.

The different sugar companies and mills will get out of their way to showcase the best there is in the industry through their respective booths at the festival site.

The Philippine Rice Research Institute will also mount an exhibition to showcase the latest in research, technologies, varieties and technology promotion regarding the Filipino's staple cereal.

Rice seeds and rice-based products will also be up for sale.

A "Balay Kalamay" (Sugar House) that will tell the story of the sugar industry in the province, complete with an Iron Dinosaur which served as the main mode of transportation for canes in the past, will be opened. This will also sell sugar-based food like butong-butong and piaya.

Event coordinator Lawrence Ledesma of the Provincial Agriculture Office said these efforts seek to highlight the sugar industry as the backbone of the economy of the province as well as the strides made on rice and food self-sufficiency.

Of course, the festival will continue to showcase the achievements made by the province which has, through the years, succeeded in its attempt to diversify its economy from solely sugar.

Today, Negros Occidental stands proud as a center of culture and arts, as a province with a wide selection of tourist attractions, and as a remarkable producer of garments, furniture, houseware, handicrafts and other products.

But sugar continues to be the top export product of the province and job generator.

The estimated income from sugar was placed at P18.07 billion in 2001 2002, with a production of 19,968,060 bags.

On March 27, spectators will have the chance to know more about the story of sugar, with the Sugar Regulatory Administration's exhibit as well as those of sugar companies and mills. They will also have a taste of sugar-based delicacies that Negros is famous for, at the booth of the Association of Negros Occidental Processed Food Producers Information and research materials as well as best products of each companies in both industries will also be displayed.

Ledesma said that because of the initiatives of Governor Joseph Marañon, the PhilRice was able to establish its station and research facility in Murcia to serve the needs of farmers.

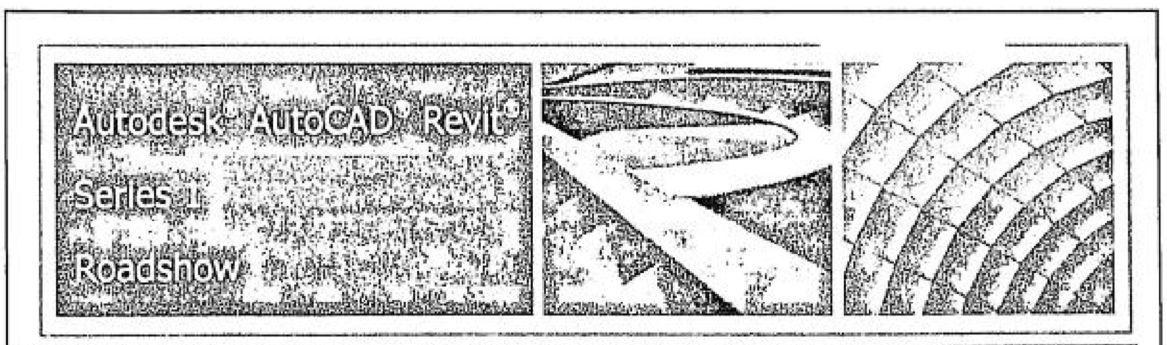
Marañon also pushed for rice hybridization in 2001 with 100 hectares of farmland planted with hybrid rice. It resulted in the yield increase for farmers, with 500 hectares already planted last year.

This year has been declared the International Year of Rice. "Rice is Life"; "Rice is Jobs"; and "Rice, the grain that shapes cultures, traditions and rituals" are just some of the slogans that are being bannered for the celebration.

Non-life insurance summit set

INSURANCE Philippines has organized the Philippine Non-Life Insurance Summit on March 31, 2004 at the Makati Shangri-La Hotel.

The theme of its Summit is "Meeting the Challenges of its Changing Non-Life Insurance Environment in the Philippine Market." The Summit will be attended by senior insurance executive, non-life underwriters, risk managers, direct brokers, reinsurance brokers, genera agents and corporate finance managers and treasurers including participants from neighboring countries. Major sponsors of this conference are the Insurance Institute for Asia and the Pacific, the Insurance Surety Association of the Philippines and the Government Service Insurance System. Other sponsors are the Philippine Insurers Club, the Philippine Association of Surety Underwriters, Miller Insurance Services and Guy Carpenter. Keynote speaker of the Summit will be Secretary Romulo Neri, Director General of the National Economic Development Authority while Insurance Commissioner Eduardo T. Malinis will give the opening address. The speakers for the summit topics are as follows: Manuel Quijano (ACE-INA); Jose G. Banzon (Seaboard-Eastern Insurance); Ricardo V. Gloria (Intra-Strata Assurance); Herminia S. Jacinto (Universal-Malayan Reinsurance); Anthony Egerton (Lloyd's Asia) and Salvador Lacson (Lacson & Lacson Insurance Broker). _For particulars, contact the Insurance Philippines Secretariat at telephone numbers 5215444 and 5260147. Telefax number 5260143._



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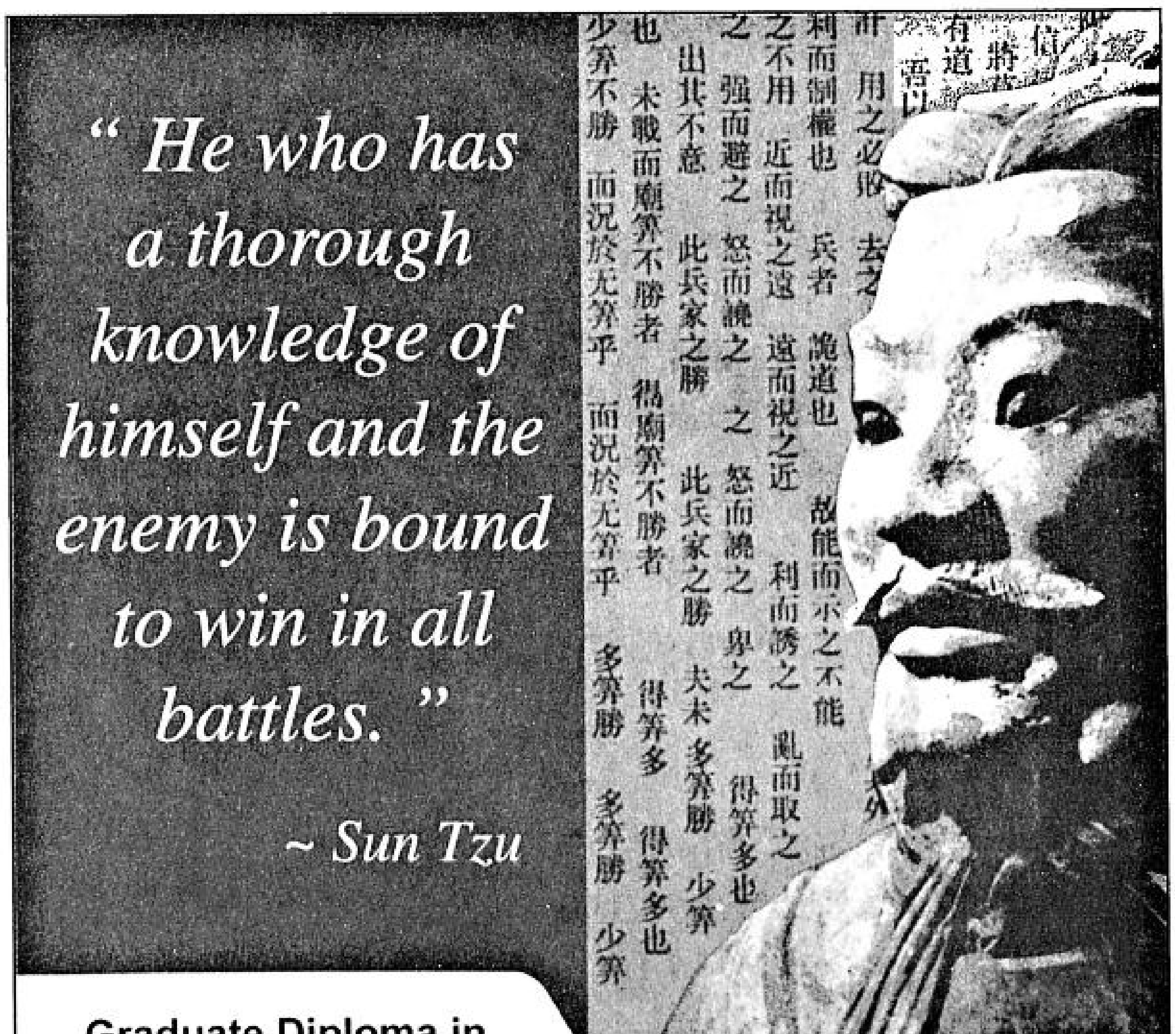
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IT GIVES me the greatest pleasure and honor to have this opportunity to express my sincerest congratulations to my colleagues in the Philippine internet indstry.

A decade of service to the industry is certainly a milestone of achievement in anybody's book of service. Since the first seeds of the internet was sown ten years ago, it has since evolved, changed and adapted to what it is today--a cutting edge, professional and service-oriented industry--that has more to offer the public in terms of services and products.

No doubt, the growth of the internet should largely be ascribed to the dedication of the professionals that make up the industry. Certainly, the 10th year of the Internet is certainly a time to be both humble and proud.

I wish you, my colleagues, well with every success and even challenges for the next years to come.

God bless you all,

MARY ANNE D. TOLENTINO
President
Phil. Internet Commerce Society

IT IS MY honor and privilege to extend my heartfelt congratulations to our colleagues in the internet industry in the Philippines, on their many achievements over the past 10 years.

The PCS salutes you, for you have broken new ground, bravely facing previously uncharted challenges. You are the Internet pioneers, leading the development and growth of the Internet phenomenon which has already made such a big impact on our lives and is expected to continue to do so in ways we may still be unaware of today. We look to you to help us manage these many changes that will undoubtedly continue to come our way.

We can only affirm and support your efforts, standing with you as a partner in Internet progress, for the benefit of our profession, our industry, and our country. Working together, I expect even greater accomplishments in the years to come!

Mabuhay tayong lahat!

BING van Tooren
President
Phil Computer Society

GREETINGS to the guests and members of Dekada: A Decade of the Internet in the Philippines.

We celebrate on this occasion a memorable milestone in the history of the Internet in the Philippines. For ten years, the members of this most progressive of industries faced the most grievous of challenges only to emerge victorious today.

To my colleagues, I am proud to note that your selflessness and professionalism helped greatly in making this tenth year of the Internet inthe country, one of the most memorable in any industry.

On this auspicious day, I extend my warm and sincere thanks to all our guests. To all the officers and members PISO PICS, & PCs who have made this 10th year possible, my heartfelt congratulations.

JOJIE S. YAP
President
Philippine Internet Services Orgnization

DEKADA: A DECADE OF INTERNET IN THE PHILIPPINES

Technology. Innovation. Progress.

DEKADA
A DECADE OF INTERNET IN THE PHILIPPINES
Technology. Innovation. Progress.

March 29, 2004, Makati Sports Club, Makati City

THE PHILIPPINE Internet Commerce Society (PICS), together with the Philippine Computer Society (PCS) and the Philippine Internet Services Organization (PISO) is commemorating the founding of the internet in the country a decade ago through a one-day industry event, dubbed as DEKADA: A Decade of Internet in the Philippines, slated to be held on March 29, 2004 at the Grand Ballroom of the Makati Sports Club, Salcedo Village, Makati City.

With the theme : technology, innovation and progress; this year's celebration focuses on the 10 years of the internet in the country and the great future that lies ahead for us.

This year's anniversary will be highlighted by an On-The-Spot Essay Writing Contest for High School students and by an "interactive" program where in members of the internet community in the various regions of the country can participate in our event through video-conferencing or iMeeting technology.

Witness this milestone for the I.t. industry. Come and be part of DEKADA!

> This year's celebration focuses on the 10 years of the internet in the country and the great future that lies ahead for us.

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Makati Sports Club
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PLDT helps define Philippine Internet history

By Candy Villanueva

FROM downloading free open source software to connecting with anyone anytime and anywhere across the oceans, anything is now possible with a mere click of a key.

Thanks to the movers of Philippine Internet, the world is now just as big as a connection's bandwidth or as big as an Internet provider could allow.

Although the country's Internet industry has not reached yet its full potential, the Internet in the Philippines has certainly come a long way from the old "Bulletin Board System" network of yore. Now, almost all companies and a considerable fraction of homes are connected to the World Wide Web.

First Philippine Internet Connectivity

The first recorded Philippine connection to the Internet was exactly a decade ago. An hour after midnight, on March 29, 1994, the country was officially connected to the Internet at the first international e-mail conference in Cebu, made possible through a connection between PhilNet, with PLDT as the partner carrier, and Sprint of USA.

In 1996, in a landmark event for foreign relations and Internet technology, President Fidel V. Ramos, Malaysian Prime Minister Mahatmir Mohamad and PLO leader Yasser Arafat convened minds in a ten minute online chat session via a 128kbps connection provided by PHnet and PLDT.

Launch of the Philippine's Internet Exchange

The following years saw the establishment of several commercial Internet Service Providers (ISP) and the connection of several schools and universities to the Internet. Ateneo de Manila, De La Salle University and the University of the Philippines were the first few to hook up.

Connections then to the Internet were all USA-terminated and in most cases local Internet traffic had to be routed through a server located in USA. With the explosive growth of Philippine local Internet, ISPs looked for solutions that would lower the cost of operations by keeping the local traffic within the country.

PLDT's support was immediately sought for this challenge. And PLDT, in its desire to proactively participate in Philippine Internet growth, responded by initiating the establishment of the first Internet Exchange in the country.

1996 saw the birth of the Philippine Internet exchange (PhIX). The end of the decade ushered in the connection of several ISPs to PhIX - including Infocom, Mozcom, EvoServe, Iphil, Virtualink, Wordtel, Pacific Internet, Tridel and Virtual Asia - and opened the door for local content.

The Growth of Digital Lifestyle

More and more organizations saw light and maximized the Internet's benefits.

Television networks (ABS-CBN, GMA 7) and broadsheet publications (Business World, Manila Bulletin, Philippine Star, Manila Times and the Philippine Daily Inquirer) went online.

Cybermags and webzines also became popular sites for information. Personal web pages and web sites sprouted left and right. Businesses saw the necessity of creating web pages to advertise their services. One of the first online ordering services in Asia was initiated by Magoo's Philippines in 1996 - a milestone for the country's eCommerce.

Slowly, the Internet became a lifestyle. Email, eGroups, search engines, downloading, online gaming, Internet dating, instant messaging and chat rooms became household and campus terms. Cyber Cafes or Internet Cafes mushroomed all over the city providing Internet access and caffeine fixes at the same time.

Digital shopping became a trend for hobbyists looking for hard-to-find items. Encyclopedias gathered dust as the Internet became a boundless source of information. Everything became electronic as job placements, ticket reservations, bill payments and banking became possible through the Net. Open Source software and MP3s, free to download, also put a large dent on several industries.

Mobile phones also entered the Internet scene in early 2000. Mobile phone companies saw this as an opportunity to introduce Wireless Application Protocol (WAP) merging Internet and Mobile technology - that saw SMS technology taking on E-mail and Web-based features.

The Hunger for More Bandwidth and the Introduction of DSL Internet

The unquenchable thirst for Internet bandwidth must be satisfied. Dial-up Internet was no longer enough.

DSL came in full force at the dawn of the new millennium. It promised cost-effective Internet access, even at broadband speed, to users on individual PCs or notebooks and Local Area Networks (LANs).

With DSL Internet, access to multimedia-based and data-intensive applications became easier. And at the forefront of this technology is PLDT - offering myDSL for individual users and BizDSL Internet for corporate users.

PLDT Today as the Country's Preferred Internet Gateway answering to the overwhelming demands of the Internet market, PLDT, together with Infocom, Netopia and Airborne, provides Internet access, using various access technologies (dial-up, Wi-Fi, DSL, frame relay, ethernet, ATM, leased line), to over 500,000 individual users and 15,000 businesses.

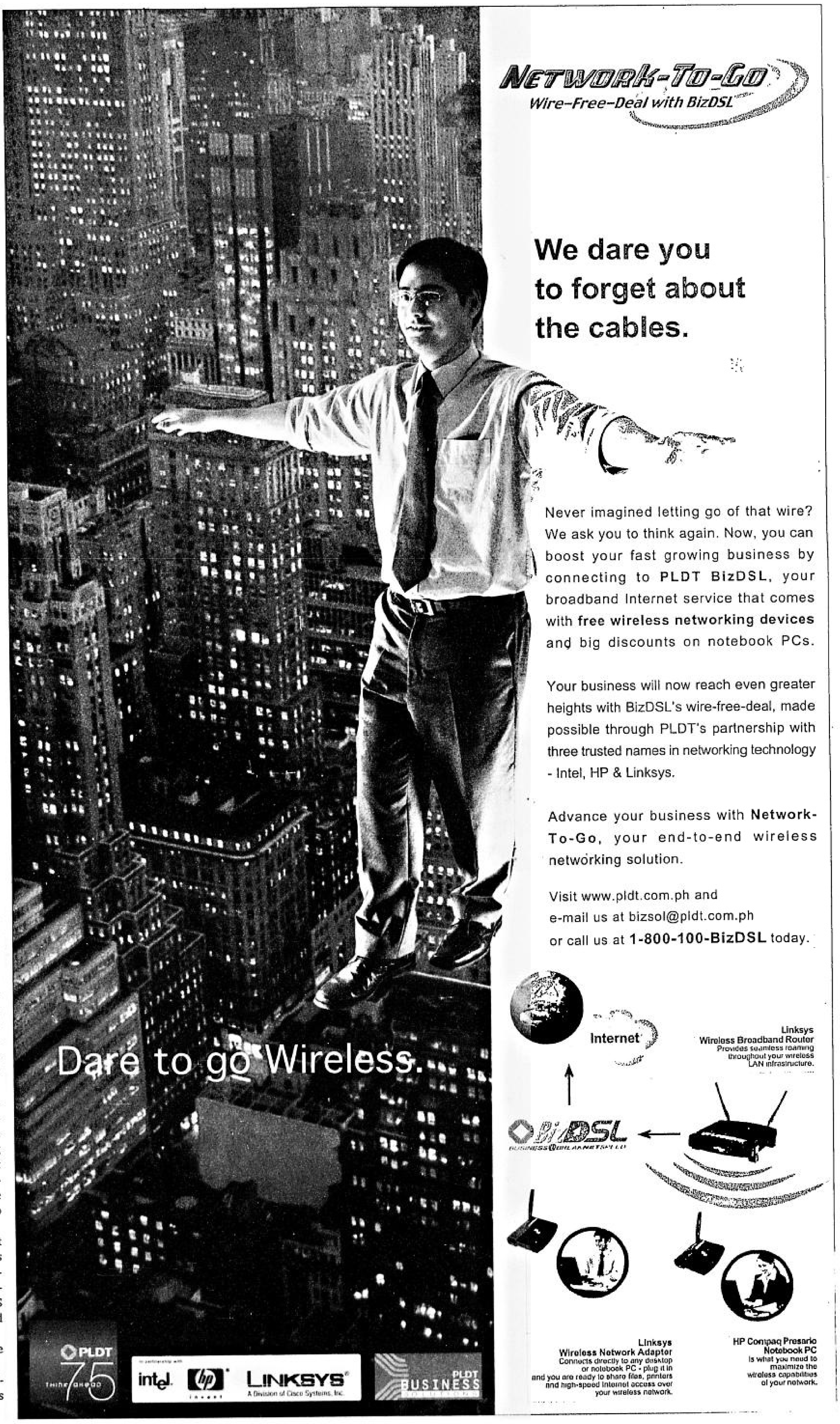
To date, PLDT's Internet hub/gateway or I-Gate has 1,000 Mbps (or 1Gbps) of dedicated international facility, connecting the Philippines to major global Internet hubs - in USA, Europe and the Asian region.

PLDT's I-Gate is not only the preferred choice in accessing the global Internet, but also the preferred location for local content providers. To cite, Level-Up's Ragnarok, the most popular online game in the country today, is presently riding on PLDT's Internet hub and can be accessed at high-speed bandwidth by the local internet users.

Relentlessly growing with the Internet industry, PLDT proficiently continues to come up with the best network solutions and the most advanced technology to compliment and spur the country's advancement in information and communication.

Over 75 years in the business, PLDT is constantly "thinking ahead" into the future.

> Over 75 years in the business, PLDT is constantly "thinking ahead" into the future.



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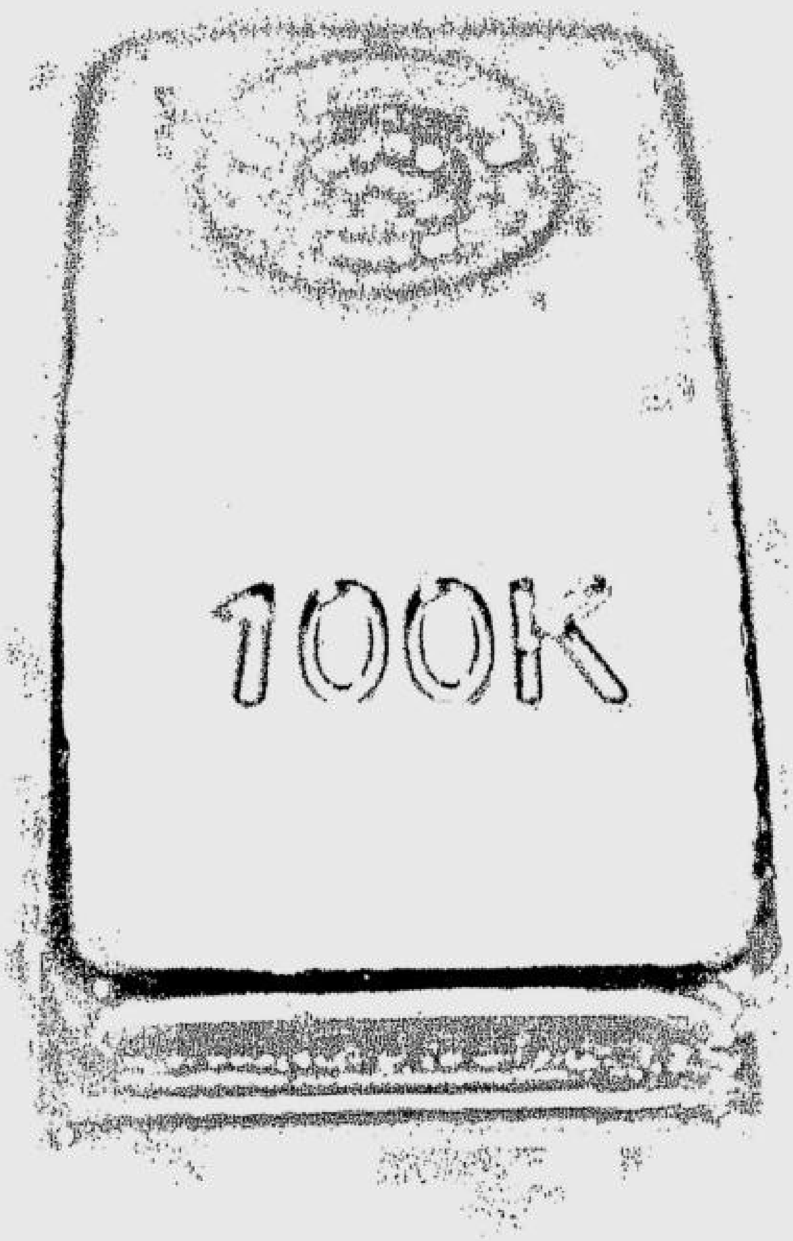

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ENTERTAINMENT

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Editor Louie C. Camino

MARTIN: Time to take the music and my countrymen further.
JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

Martin Nievera tickets sell for $45 a night

By Marinel R. Cruz

FOR $45 a night, Martin Nievera had to sing to a motley group of 400 people at the Golden Nugget Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas.

He has never worked harder than when he held his series of shows titled "Martin Nievera: Singing and Swinging at the Golden Nugget" in Las Vegas, from Dec. 31 last year up to Feb. 29, 2004.

He had to sacrifice big time to be in top form for every performance. One of the things he had to give up was talking, which everybody knows Martin loves doing.

In the two months that his Golden Nugget stint lasted, Martin confessed that he had to really discipline himself.

"I don't talk hours before the show. Complete silence," he said. "As soon as the curtains close, no talking. I have dinner after the show, if there's still time. If not, I go straight to my room and watch old movies.

"I swear to God, I really had to teach myself to shut up, vocalize and take a nap before each show," he said. "No partying, no going out. During my days off, I promote on radio and TV shows all over Las Vegas."

Bonding, karaoke singing

Mondays and Tuesdays were his days off.

"Every Monday, I go to a restaurant called Bootlegger for a little bonding time with fellow singers there," Martin said. "I'm the new kid on the block. Do you know how we singers 'bond?' We sing karaoke. This usually lasts up to 1:30 to 2 in the morning."

But there were small blessings that Martin could be thankful for.

"Every once in a while, I stick a couple of Martin songs. 'Kahit Isang Saglit' is a crowd favorite," he said. "But until I become an established Las Vegas performer, I do as I am told. People want to hear a lot of Frank Sinatra songs there."

The owners of the hotel are trying to revive the great male balladeer image, he said.

"That's great news for me. I think that's what's going to keep me in the business for a long while.

"I go where my music takes me. I've been here for 21 years. It's time to move on. Not in an arrogant sense, but to take the music and my countrymen further."

As the headliner at the Golden Nugget Hotel and Casino, Martin was set up by producers of Fox Network's reality-TV show "Casino" into fighting with Canadian singer Matt Dusk over a venue at the hotel.

But Martin had seen the microphone hidden under the shirts of the men who had asked him what he felt about Dusk wanting to perform in the room where he was performing at the hotel.

"They couldn't fool me. I saw the microphone tucked under their shirts. So I was the nicest, most sincere and humble (person) that I could be," said Martin.

Real-life dramas

The ruse was supposed to be part of a behind-the-scenes look at the real-life dramas that unfold at the Golden Nugget that would be included in the 13-episode "Casino." The show is apparently a promotional effort of the new owners of the hotel to bring back the glory of its "Rat Pack" days. It will premiere on Fox TV sometime in June or July, according to Martin.

These are just some of the tales of the Filipino singer trying to make it big in the land of the almighty greenback that Martin had brought back to tell a group of press people in Manila last week.

He will fly back to the US in August for an eight-city "Singing and Swinging" tour with his all-American band.

Major triumph

"We'll be going to places that I've never performed before," Martin said of his two-month tour. Among the cities Martin will be visiting are Miami and Orlando in Florida, Houston in Texas, Riverside in California, and Oregon.

A major triumph for Martin is how his CDs are now being sold in Tower Records Las Vegas. He is the only Filipino artist who has been able to stake his claim on the shelves of the record chain.

He apparently considers this a major achievement and has the pictures that he had taken with his Nokia 6600 cell phone as proof

MARTIN/ C6

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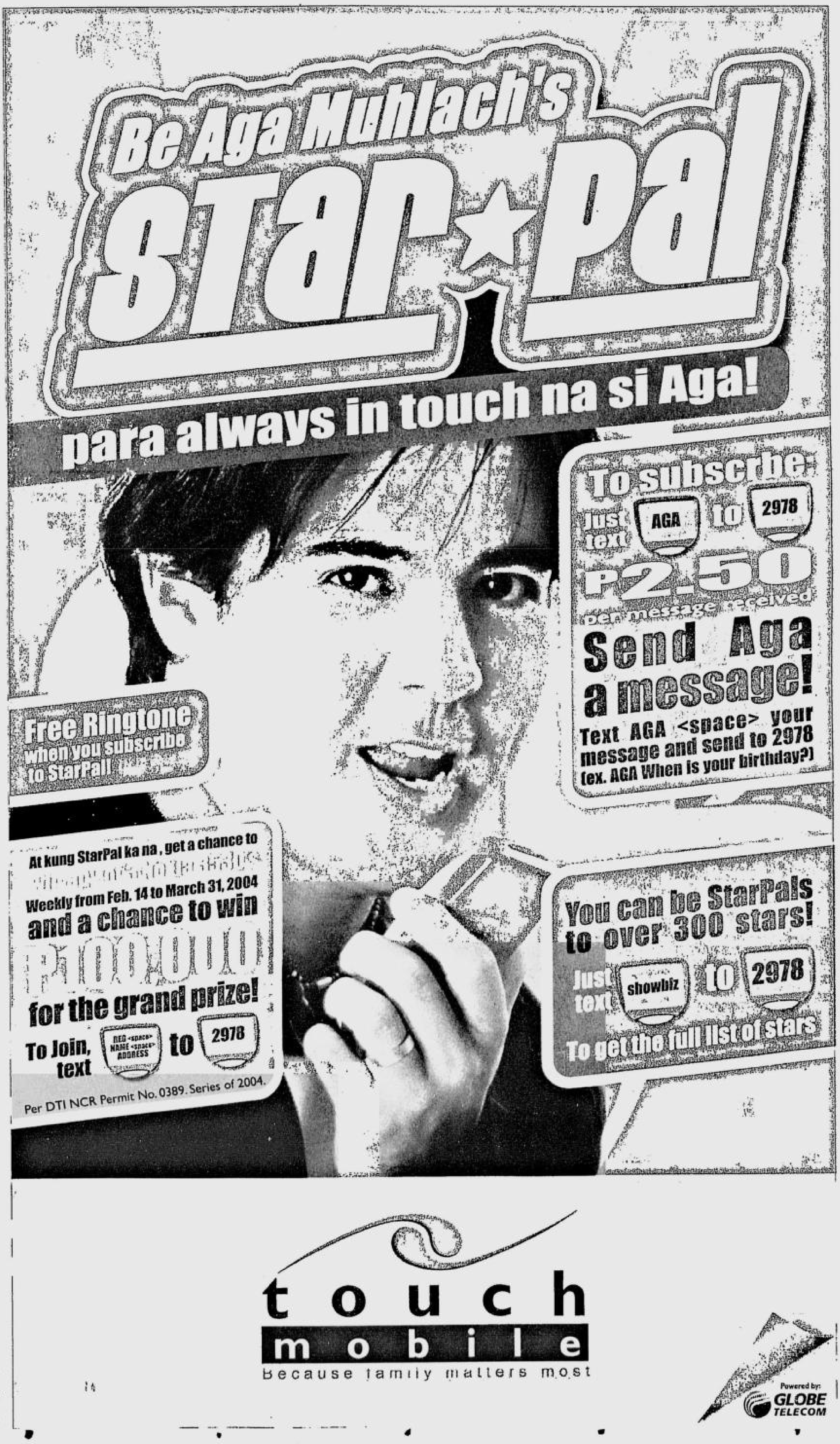

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JUMPERS worn when the boobs were barely there

SEVEN-YEAR-OLD checkered shift dress that can be folded to hanky size

BARGAIN find at SM: P100 tube top.

LEATHER is the material of choice for jackets in boring beige and flamboyant orange.

Asia Agcaoli before and after the boob exposure

By Marinel R. Cruz
Photos by Jim Guiao Punzalan

STILETTO half boots make for sexier legs

LET'S TALK about breasts.

Viva Hot Babe Asia Agcaoili can argue until she's blue in the face that it was an accident when one of her breasts were bared during an opening dance number on the March 9 episode of the noontime variety show "MTB Ang Saya Saya."

"What happened was never intentional. Now, I just want to forget the whole incident," she said.

For the accidental breast exposure, Asia was given a 20-day suspension by ABS-CBN after the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB) complained about the incident,

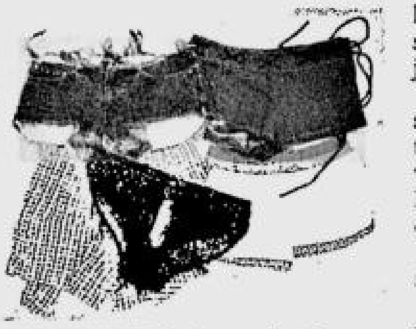
Asia was wearing a mermaid-inspired turquoise cat suit when her left bust suddenly popped out of the costume.

"I wasn't wearing any under wear during the dance number," Asia told INQUIRER Entertainment in an interview at her two-bedroom condominium unit in Makati City.

"When I felt that my right breast was showing the first time, I pulled the blouse to my right side. No one saw that. But I must have pulled too hard that the other breast was exposed instead," the sexy starlet explained.

A few days after the incident, Asia apologized on the news program "TV Patrol."

"I'm not saying that it should happen to every sexy actress, but to me, the incident was a blessing in disguise," she said. "I used to be so depressed. I thought it was the end of my career. But because of the incident, people recognized me. I got to use the suspension to earn extra money."



THE SKIMPIER the better the short pants.

The Viva Hot Babes are seen on weekdays on "MTB" and on the new gag show "Yes Yes Show" every Wednesday. But while serving her suspension, Asia received an invitation to appear for a month in the soap series "Basta't Kasama Kita," also on ABS-CBN.

"'MTB' eats up a lot of our time, but it's really fun," said Asia. "With the new soap, I hope my career will take off."

Asia, 22, used to be one of the hosts of the reality-based program "Single" on ABC 5 before she joined the second batch of Viva Hot Babes last year.

"I've always wanted to perform since I was 9. I was part of every school program," said Asia, a graduate of clothing technology at the University of the Philippines in Diliman.

"I met my manager Jessica (Rodriguez) through A.J. Baguio, a make-up artist who's a friend of mine. She said I'd be packaged as a sexy artist.

"I didn't have trouble accepting the job. I know I don't look wholesome," she admitted. "I prefer sexy clothes even before I joined show biz."

This was why Asia said she did not have to adjust much when she joined Viva Hot Babes.

"Funky *naman na talaga ako pumorma* (My style is funky)," she said.

"I actually design my own stuff," she said, while showing INQUIRER Entertainment a halter top made from T'Boli beads, which she made as a school project.

"I sewed this for about a month. I used to wear this before I had big boobs. This is tied around the back."

That she had breast enhancement surgery is no big secret. In fact, Asia seems to flaunt the fact that her breasts were formed by a doctor and not by nature by showing clothes she had worn before her breasts were enlarged.

What is great about wearing sexy outfits, said Asia, is that you could buy a lot of clothes without worrying about storage space.

"I buy the teenie-weenie stuff so a small closet space would do."

There were more tiny garments inside Asia's closet, INQUIRER Entertainment found out.

OUT OF THE CLOSET

Halter tops. "I like this brown floral top because it's revealing. I get paid to be sexy so this works wonders for me. Besides, you can't really get it here. I got it in Manchester. Have you seen Pink's new video? She wore one just like this, although hers was plain."

"Another top I like is this one, which shows the silhouette of my body. I think that's sexy. I think it's 'safe' in a lot of ways. You can wear a bra with this. Even if the bra straps are exposed, the outfit still looks okay."

Another favorite is a tube top, which she bought from SM for only P100.

"Isn't it cute? I like the color. I wear it with pants or short shorts. It really depends on my mood."

Dresses. "A white chiffon floral dress is the most revealing outfit I have so far. I bought this in an *ukay-ukay* a few years ago. It's see-through. I wear nothing but a bra and panty underneath. Its a very 'Sex in the City' look."

A checkered cotton dress is also a favorite.

"I've had this for over seven years now. I still wear it. A friend from Australia gave this to me. What's nice about this is that you can easily fold it and it becomes a handkerchief. I could easily put this in my handbag and leave."

SKIMPY top with sequins and a pair of shorts made from native woven fabric, accentuated by a belt, also made from homegrown material

Shorts. "This pair of shorts was given by a friend, too. It didn't fit me too well before so I decided to cut it. Now it looks really cute on me. As it gets older, it gets more comfortable."

"This denim panty was a gift from Miles, who is the closest to me among the Hot Babes. I got to wear this for pictorials. I like skimpy stuff."

"I actually designed these jumpers myself. I bought the fabric somewhere in Kamuning for P120 per yard. When I had this made, I didn't have boobs yet. (laughs). But I still get to wear it up to now."

Accessories. "I do beadwork sometimes, but most of what I have right now were made by my sister. We sell what she makes.

"I'm into crosses lately. I got the black cross in Dublin two years ago. The silver one I bought locally, from someone who was selling accessories in ABS-CBN.

"Wearing the right accessories depends on how simple or frilly your outfit is. If you're wearing something simple, then it follows that your accessories are also simple. If you really want to be loud, you just have to be confident in order to carry it well."

Blazers. "I don't usually wear blazers but I had to wear one for my thesis defense last year so I bought blazers. This one from Mango has a matching dress."

"When buying corporate clothes, there has to be some allowance because you're sure to be wearing something inside. The fabric should not be too thick because the weather here is too warm. The sleeves should fall right on your wrist bone, not shorter, not longer. You really have to try it on before you buy it. That's an important rule."

Jackets. "These two leather jackets are the stuff that I wear when I travel. I bought the beige one in an *ukay-ukay* two years ago. I like the fabric, it's really warm. Being beige makes it easy to match this jacket with anything I have. I was attracted to the orange one because it was the only orange jacket in a rack of black ones. Besides, they said orange is the next red."

Jeans. "I'm not into jeans. I find jeans uncomfortable to wear. But if I'm to choose from what I have, I'd pick a pair that is made of light fabric. Aside from the fact that it's not too warm, I look thin whenever I wear it.

"When you buy jeans, you have to make sure that it's sewn well. Look for stitches that might rip. Jeans are made to last long, you don't want an expensive pair to have holes."

Shoes. "I like this strappy sandals that I bought in Manchester. It's very sexy. But the problem is, it tends to constrict the blood flow in my legs. I still have to figure out a way to wear it without hurting myself (laughs).

"The pair of rubber shoes with pink and purple polka dots is my favorite. I bought this in Manchester, too.

"I bought the pair of stiletto boots because it looks best with the white polyester ruffled skirt that I have. The

ASIA/ C6

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VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

NOW that it's graduation time, seniors all over the country are figuring out what to do with the rest of their lives. We hope that the best and brightest among them will consider careers in the electronic media, more specifically radio, TV and film.

These media are important because they use electronic or cinematic technology to disseminate facts, ideas, emotions and values to literally millions of people.

One of the reasons why these media are doing less than wonderfully in this country is because a number of the people running or working in them aren't all that outstanding. In fact, some of them are show biz types concerned only about the week's ratings, and not much else.

Worse, some haven't even sufficiently trained themselves to do good work in their medium of choice. They get by on sheer gumption and by shining up the right people, and their lack of quality and training shows on the sloppy work they do.

Worst of all, they have shallow, shortsighted, utilitarian values, and consciously or not, they disseminate those negative values through their work, for many viewers, including vulnerable young people, to imbibe.

This is reprehensible, because these persuasive media, which deserve the best people, end up with workers who merely exploit their reach, while co-opting and even canceling out their more positive strengths.

The situation becomes even more worrisome when badly prepared people assume executive positions. The shoddy and irresponsible work they do is aped by the people working under them, thus institutionalizing mediocrity and irresponsibility.

To arrest and counteract this downward spiral, bright and well-motivated young graduates should try to find work in radio, television and the movies. True, they're going to have a tough time surviving in those occasionally compromised media. But they've got to give it their best try, because millions of listeners and viewers out there deserve better programs and films than they're getting now.

Young people, especially, deserve better role models than the tacky and tricky sort they're being exposed to in the electronic media of late. If the operative principle of "garbage in, garbage out" continues to hold sway, Filipino youths could end up as aficionados of trash.—And where's the future in that, if you don't want to live in an electronic Payatas of the disheartened heart?

We continue to hope that the media's battered, co-opted veterans will experience an epiphany that will make them do good, responsible work from here on in. Failing that miraculous denouement, however, it's young graduates who will have to effect the much-needed and long-desired transformation.

The task is a daunting one, but we trust that our best and brightest take up the challenge, and do their utmost to be of better service to the electronic media's audience. The millions in that audience deserve nothing less.

'The Day After Tomorrow'

ROLAND Emmerich's "The Day After Tomorrow" will be released worldwide on May 28. The film is a cautionary tale about an abrupt change in the world's climate, with cataclysmic consequences for the entire planet. It stars **Dennis Quaid, Jake Gyllenhaal** and **Emmy Rossum.**

Songfest finalists

VIVA Foundation for the Arts announces the finalists in its first Levi Pop Songwriting Festival:

"Ikaw" by **Derrick Anselmo**, "Babadap-badap" by **Gary Granada**, "Time to Go" by **Rebel V. Magdagasang**, "Ngumingiti-ngiti" by **Manuel Mallillin**, "Sa 'king Panaginip" by **Melvin Marallos**, "Hopeless Romantic" by **Christian V. Martinez**, "Baliw" by **Serafin Murillo**, "Alam Ko, Alam Mo" by **Gerry M. Olaguer**, "6 Feet" by **Emmanuel Panaligan**, "Ganyan ang Pag-ibig Ko" by **Enrico Sta. Maria**, "Hanggang Saan, Hanggang Kailan" by **Arnold Reyes**, and "I'm Sorry" by **Soc Villanueva** and **Jungee Marcelo**.

The grand finals will be held on April 2 at the UP Theater. The top prize is P250,000.

'Three for the Road'

ON APRIL 22 and 29, and May 6 and 13, Merk's Bar Bistro presents "Three for the Road: A Tribute to Davis Jr., Bennett and Sinatra," featuring **Richard Merk, Robert Seña** and **Mon David.**

Richard, Robert and Mon will sing songs identified with singing greats **Sammy Davis Jr., Tony Bennett** and **Frank Sinatra**—"Tender Is the Night," "Witchcraft," "Days of Wine and Roses," "Angel Eyes," "I'm A Fool To Want You," "The Shadow of Your Smile"—etc.! Call 757-4720.

SHOW TIME

Kapampangan album

JAZZ singer, songwriter, record producer Mon David rediscovers his Kapampangan roots via "Abe Mu Ku"—a compilation of Kapampangan love songs, traditional folk tunes and his original compositions. The album was launched yesterday at the Holy Angel University Center for Kapampangan Studies.

Included in the album are songs he recorded in "Pamalsinta Quetang Milabas," (Himno ning Kapampangan, Malagung Kakung Palsintan and ARO! Katimyas na Nitang Dalaga), a groundbreaking album by the Sapni ng Crissot Literary and Cultural Foundation a few years back. This inspired him to write songs in his native tongue—one of which is the title cut "Abe Mu Ku" and the inspiring tribute to the inherent goodness and kindness of the Kapampangan, "Kabalen, Tune Kang Malugud."

The compilation also features songs he recorded with artists Rita, like the festive "Masayang Kebaitan Keka," a birthday song he co-wrote with Andy Alviz, and the uplifting "Kapampangan Ku," also written by Alviz. The lineup is completed with two of Fr. Cris Cadiang's Christmas lullabies, "Benging Banal" and "King Tahimik A Kabengian."

Mon will be performing with Richard Merk and Robert Seña in "Three For The Road," a tribute to Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett and Sammy Davis Jr., at Merk's Bar in Greenbelt 3, Ayala Center on April 22 and 29, and on May 6 and 13.

Starstruck Kids goes daily

THE REALITY-BASED kiddie artists search "Starstruck Kids" will be airing from Monday to Saturday starting March 29.

This was announced last Saturday in the show's episode in Splash Island, Laguna.

The announcement came after the show experienced a phenomenal rise among television viewers.

The launch of "Starstruck Kids" last week registered an overnight rating of 28 percent versus the 20 percent received by ABS-CBN's "Star Circle Quest," which aired on the same timeslot.

The program ratings show that viewers prefer "Starstruck" over its rival, being the pioneer in the reality-based format of talent searches on Philippine TV.

Finalists of Starstruck Kids will now have more opportunity to show their best as they take on the challenge to pursue their dream, believe in themselves, and survive the tests of childhood stardom.

The show airs daily after "Extra Challenge," and every Saturday at 6 p.m. on GMA 7.

DINGDONG with his manager Manny Valera, concert producers Lorna Buehler and Guia Natividad, and two unidentified friends

First time

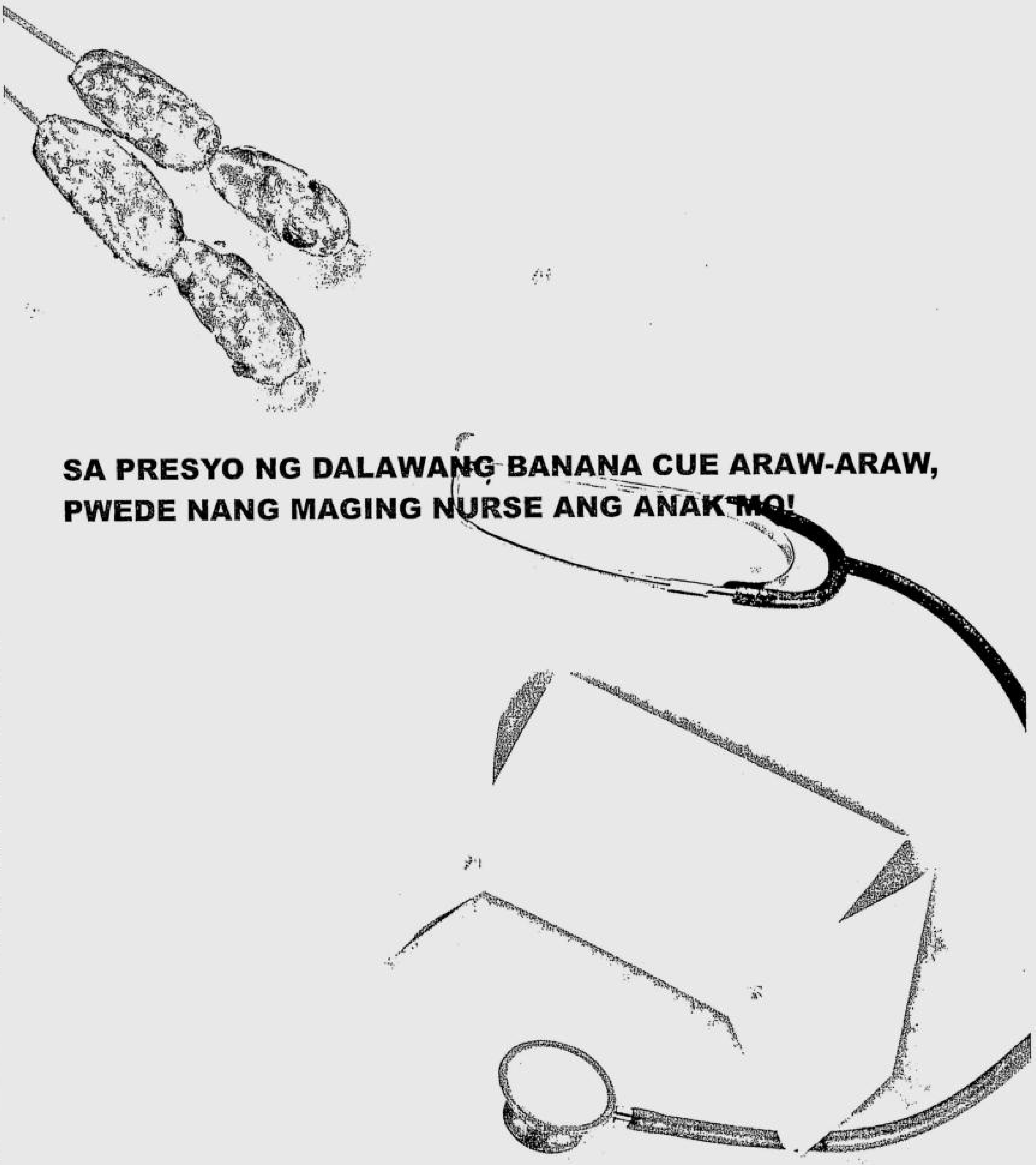
SINGER Jessa Zaragosa and husband Dingdong Avanzado held a successful concert last month, dubbed "Jessa and Dingdong... First Time 2gether US Concert Tour."

The show saw Jessa mesmerizing a jam-packed crowd with her repertoire of home-grown hits and covers of American chartbusters like Christina Aguilera's "Beautiful" and a Shirley Bassey medley.

Jessa and Dingdong opened the Stardust Hotel's Wayne Newton Theater show with a romantic duet of "I Finally Found Someone." This they sang as they dramatically descended onto the stage via a capsule.

Among the packed crowd was Martin Nievera, who was impressed with Jessa's vocal versatility. Dingdong acknowledged his presence by dedicating "Kahit Isang Saglit" to Martin.

"I am proud of Dingdong and Jessa," beams producer Lorna Buehler of Comic Lab. "For our first venture into producing concerts here in America, my co-producer Danny Natividad and I are extremely happy with the performance of the singing couple. *Ang galing*!"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President bares plans for local movie industry

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo revealed her plans for the movie industry, which is being threatened into extinction by piracy.

In a press statement, Ms Macapagal admitted that there are still a lot of things to be done to jump-start the industry even as she bared her strategies to counteract piracy by establishing the Cinema Evaluation Board and by reducing the amusement tax by 50 percent.

"I developed the momentum despite the fact that I haven't served a full term (as President). But that's just a down payment," she said in the statement.

She appealed for support to "see my plans through and to be able to address the other problems of the industry."

One of her pet projects is to build a mini-cultural center in every province.

"During martial law, they realigned money from the land reform program to build the Cultural Center of the Philippines. Instead of one big center like the CCP, which is beyond the reach of the ordinary Filipino, a better idea would be to put up smaller centers in the provinces," said the President.

The mini-cultural centers would also help spur the growth of local talents, giving them a place to showcase their skills, according to the President.

Ms Macapagal confessed to having a soft spot for the movies and the performing arts.

"I have been a movie fan since I was a child," she confessed. "I still am."

She added that she would meet with leaders of the movie industry and other show biz sectors to sound them out and listen to their suggestions.

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REMAR	X-MEN 2
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CINEMA-6	PEEP SHOW
CINEMA-7	TORQUE
CINEMA-8	CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	SCOOBY DOO 2
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	HIGHWAYMEN
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	50 FIRST DATES
CINEMA-12	GRUDGE 2
CINEMA-14	GHOSTFIGHTER (RI)
CINEMA-15	OTSO OTSO
LORES	
CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
NE CINEMAGIC - CABANATUAN	
(LAS PINAS)	TORQUE
CINEMA-1	OTSO OTSO
CINEMA-2	GOTHIKA
CINEMA-4	[illegible]
UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL	
(PARANAQUE)	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-1	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
CINEMA-2	MEN IN BLACK II
CINEMA-4	SELDA

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RESERVED SEATING

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1	CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN	11:35, 1:40, 3:45 5:50, 7:55, 10:00	GP
2	SCOOBY DOO 2	11:55, 2:25, 4:55 7:25, 9:55	GP
3	50 FIRST DATES	11:30, 1:40, 3:50 6:00, 8:10, 10:20	PG-13
4	HIGHWAYMEN	11:20, 1:20, 3:20 5:20, 7:20, 9:20	R-13

POWER PLANT CINEMA

Rockwell Center, Makati City ☎ Tel. No: 8981440-41 DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX

WISE GIRLS R18 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, 9:30	SCOOBY DOO 2 GP 1:20, 3:30, 5:40, 7:50, 10:00	SCOOBY DOO 2 GP 12:45, 2:55, 5:05, 7:15, 9:25
HIGHWAYMEN R13 12:20, 2:20, 4:20, 6:20, 8:20, 10:20	LOVE ACTUALLY R18 1:25, 4:10, 6:55, 9:40	50 FIRST DATES PG13 12:15, 2:10, 4;15, 6:10, 8:15, 10:20

MATINEE P80.00 - FREE SEATING - SCREENINGS BEFORE 5 PM - MON. TO FRI.

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GP

CINEMA 2 — 50 FIRST DATES
11:00, 1:10, 3:20, 5:30, 7:40, 10:00
P13

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2	50 FIRST DATES	11:10, 1:20, 3:30, 5:40, 7.50, 10:00
3	BUTTERFLY EFFECT	11:55, 2:05, 4:15, 6:25, 8:35, 10:30
4	HIGHWAYMEN	12 20, 2:26, 4:30, 6:35, 8:40, 10:30
5	SCOOBY DOO 2	11:35, 1:40, 3:45, 5:50, 7.55, 10.00
6	THE GRUDGE 2	12:20, 2 25, 4.30, 6.35, 8.40, 10:30
7	OTSO-OTSO	10:35, 12 50, 3:05, 5:20, 7:35, 9:50
8	WISE GIRLS	11:35, 2:05, 4:15, 6:25, 8:35, 10:30
9	LOVE ACTUALLY	10.40, 1:25, 4:10, 6.55, 9:40
10	DEATH CURSE	12:20, 2:25, 4:30, 6:35, 8:40, 10:30

MATINEE: Monday to Friday/ 10 am-4pm except holidays
Matinee Price: P100 THX cinema / P80 for one level cinemas
Regular Price: P130 THX / P95/65 for two levels cinemas / P95 for one level cinemas

ERMITA
526-7185 / 536-7809 to 12

1	SCOOBY DOO 2	10:15, 12:10, 2:05, 4:00, 5:55, 7:50, 9:50
2	THE GRUDGE 2	11:15, 1.05, 2.55, 4.45, 6:35, 8:25, 10.00
3	WISE GIRLS	11:55, 2.00, 4.05, 6.10, 8.15, 10:00
4	DEATH CURSE	11.15, 1 05, 2 55, 4 45, 6 35, 8.25, 10 00
5	OTSO-OTSO	10 10, 12 35, 2:40, 4 55, 7:10, 9:40
6	HIGHWAYMEN	10.40, 12 40, 2 40, 4 40, 6.40, 8 35, 10.00
7	50 FIRST DATES	10 50, 1 00, 3 10, 5 20, 7 30, 9:50

Big R Supercenter METRO EAST
682-8193/99 / 682-8280

1	HIGHWAYMEN	10:50, 12:50, 2:50, 4:50, 6:50, 9:00
2	50 FIRST DATES	11:50, 2:10, 4:30, 6:50, 9:10
3	KARIBAL	11.50, 1:40, 3.30, 5 20, 7:10, 9.00
4	SCOOBY DOO 2	11:20, 1.40, 4.00, 6.20, 8.40
5	SCOOBY DOO 2	10 50, 1.10, 3.30, 5.50, 8.10, 10:30
6	THE GRUDGE 2	10:40, 12 40, 2 40, 4 40, 6.40, 8.40
7	BUTTERFLY EFFECT	11 00, 1 00, 3 00, 5 00, 7.00, 9.00
8	OTSO-OTSO	11:00, 1:30, 4:00, 6:30, 9:00

Big R Supercenter NOVALICHES / FAIRVIEW
935-3229 / 31

1	SCOOBY DOO 2	11:25, 1:15, 3:05, 4:55, 6:45, 8:35
2	OTSO-OTSO	11:20, 1:35, 3:50, 6 05, 8:30
3	BUTTERFLY EFFECT	12 00, 2 25, 4 50, 7:15, 9.00
4	THE CURSE	11:50, 1:45, 3 40, 5 35, 7.30, 9:00
5	HIGHWAYMEN	11 25, 1:15, 3:05, 4:55, 6.45, 8.35
6	THE GRUDGE 2	11.40, 1.45, 3.50, 5.55, 8:10
7	50 FIRST DATES	11.45, 1:55, 4.05, 6 15, 8.30
8	THE NIGHTMARE	11:00, 12 55, 2.50, 4 45, 6.40, 8 35

Citisquare MALABON
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1	WISHING STAIRS
2	OTSO-OTSO
3	SCOOBY DOO 2
4	KARIBAL

big Supercenter CAINTA
240-4661

1	SCOOBY DOO 2
2	OTSO-OTSO
3	KARIBAL
4	50 FIRST DATES

Big R Supercenter STA. ROSA
Laguna (049)837-0907

1	SCOOBY DOO 2
2	BONE SNATCHER
3	OTSO-OTSO
4	50 FIRST DATES
5	LOVE ACTUALLY

Big R Supercenter LIPA
757-3664 / 312-5870

1	CARMEN
2	OTSO-OTSO
3	LANGIT MO KALIGAYAHAN KO
4	THE CURSE
5	SCOOBY DOO 2

Big R Supercenter DASMARIÑAS
852-2125

1	OTSO-OTSO
2	LOVE ACTUALLY
3	SCOOBY DOO 2
4	THE GRUDGE 2
5	CARMEN

Big R Supercenter STARMILLS
675-1927 / 961-5270

1	LOVE ACTUALLY
2	LANGIT MO KALIGAYAHAN KO
3	OTSO-OTSO
4	THE GRUDGE 2
5	SCOOBY DOO 2
6	TORQUE

IMUS
471-8188 / 875-5858

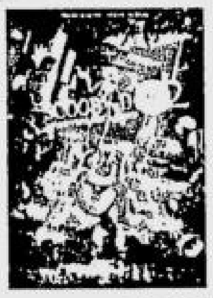
1	SCOOBY DOO 2
2	50 FIRST DATES
3	KARIBAL
4	DEATH CURSE
5	OTSO-OTSO
6	THE GRUDGE 2

BACOLOD
441-0458/59

1	SCOOBY DOO 2
2	GOTHIKA
3	OTSO-OTSO
4	CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN
5	CARMEN
6	DRAGON VS. NINJA

ILOILO
336-8070/78

1	SCOOBY DOO 2
2	DUPLEX
3	OTSO-OTSO
4	WATER DEMON
5	TOTALLY BLONDE
6	GOTHIKA



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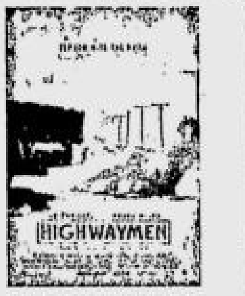

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Art house movie for atonement theology

REVIEW

By Ruben M. Cruz Jr.
Contributor

WHEN Martin Scorsese made "Taxi Driver" in 1976, his parish priest in Flushing, New York, told him the movie was "too much Good Friday, not enough Easter Sunday." The same critique would have fit Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ" perfectly.

I don't have any holy frustration about the movie. Indeed, one can't help but admire Mel Gibson's almost supernatural faith in his ability to pull "The Passion" off.

"The Passion" is a considerable achievement, the work of a movie maker in command of his craft. It brings us astonishing sights and has the headlong momentum of a storyteller who knows he has a good one to share—all four Gospels no less with their respective versions of the Passion drama. One could say it's the feature-film version of the 14 Stations of the Cross. Or, the art house movie for atonement theology.

Some critics took exception to its brutally vicious depiction of the last 12 hours of Yeshua Ben Nazareth a.k.a. Jesus, calling the violence in the movie too "numbing" it fails to serve its thematic purpose in the end.

Passion story reworked

The Filipinos in Guagua, Pampanga, who routinely beat their backs to a bloody pulp with bamboo whips and then nail themselves to the cross every Good Friday in mystical commemoration of Jesus' death would probably disagree. And though I'm not sure if it's for the same reason, I disagree too.

The Gospels really do not give a thorough account of the horrors of Christ's crucifixion, nor the ordeal that he went through before he was crucified. In the history of the Roman Empire, Jesus was just one of about a quarter of a million Jews who were put to what was considered then the cruelest of death sentences (Romans crucified slaves, thieves and prisoners of war, but not their own citizens). But we ourselves know the story so well that it's easy to gloss over it sometimes.

Gibson, however, gives us a reworking of the Passion story that addresses the historical and documentary context of Christ's last 12 hours, emphasizing the human nature of the story without doubting it's spiritual purpose. Sure it's violent and blood-soaked, but that is precisely how Gibson means to shake up stale religious assumptions and revitalize waning faiths. It's as if the whole movie is saying: Look, when the Evangelists said Jesus suffered for us, they mean he really, really suffered! It wasn't a pretty sight, and if you can't get over it then good for you!

Good theater

Gibson is no different from this priest I had in high school, our Latin teacher who made us cry with guilt every time he explained in painstaking detail how each of our sins was responsible for nailing Jesus to the cross.

It may not be good theology but in Gibson's hands it can certainly be good theater. From the "Agony in the Garden" to Christ's resurrection, Gibson tells the story with such poetic extravagance it would be hard not to be swept away. The 1995 Oscar best director (for "Braveheart," which also won best picture) knows how to make shots and craft sequences for maximum emotional resonance. For instance, as an example of visceral power, take that virtuoso tracking shot of a single drop of rain (before the deluge) that falls on James Caviezel's Jesus after he dies on the cross. Or the stomach-turning "Scourging at the Pillar" that drove at least two people I know to tears. (They were also so guilt-ridden that they went to confession after seeing the movie).

"The Passion" has a real pulse, the sense of a whole dangerous world pressing in relentlessly on Jesus and his Apostles. The opening sequence at Gethsemane is one of the most deftly foreboding buildups I have seen in a long, long time. Throughout the movie one can feel that seething undercurrent of intolerance that makes it perilous to be a Jesus-follower, and definitely makes Peter's betrayal of Jesus (before the cock crows thrice) all too humanly possible.

Meticulous

The period visuals are so meticulous they seem to have been researched down to the last crevice and cobblestone. Gethsemane, first century Jerusalem, Golgotha and all the other places are recreated with nary a digital effect in sight (or at least it seems that way). If the look of a movie were enough to guarantee greatness then "The Passion" would, hands-down, be a masterpiece.

The use of the original languages during Jesus' time—Aramaic for the Palestinian Jews and street Latin for the Romans (the movie's scholars claim Greek was used only by the intellectuals then)—also gave a refreshing richness and depth to the lines of the Gospel that have become unsettlingly too familiar to us believers.

Not unexpectedly though, the Vatican I-adherent Gibson makes use of traditional Catholic iconography throughout "The Passion."

Common interpretation

The Jesus we see in the movie is the common interpretation of Caucasian Christian artists: tall, with light skin, a Roman nose and long hair. Caviezel's look might as well have been tailored after (the Italian Renaissance painter) Titian's "Christ the Redeemer."

JUST ONE of the brutally vicious depictions of the last 12 hours of Yeshua Ben Nazareth, or Jesus of Nazareth, played by Jim Caviezel.

Mary Magdalene (Monica Bellucci) is still portrayed (in a flashback) as the prostitute who would have been stoned to death if it were not for Jesus' intercession. It is perhaps more cinematic to stick to the image of Mary Magdalene as the patron saint of "bad girls" to serve as a powerful personal testimony to the saving power of Jesus' love. Certainly, Bellucci's looks alone could inspire sinfulness. But my theology teachers at Maryhill would never forgive me if I don't mention that nothing in the New Testament ever said that the woman they called Mary of Magdala was a prostitute, only that Jesus cast seven demons from her (in Luke). What all four Gospels agree on is that she witnessed Jesus' crucifixion from the foot of the cross and was also the first witness to Jesus' resurrection.

Also, while the grace of God is surely big enough to forgive Judas, there's not a hint of his salvation in the movie. In "The Passion," he is resigned to his perpetually infamous and familiar role as the man whose name is synonymous with treachery, who, as the movie depicts, was even haunted by demons until he hanged himself.

While John's Gospel did write about him as a Satan-possessed thief, it's interesting to note that some Japanese I know would actually deem Judas to be a worthy role model. And why not, they argue, Judas acknowledged his mistake, he gave back the 30 pieces of silver he was paid to betray Jesus, and he committed suicide to show the sincerity of his remorse!

And then, of course, there's the much-debated alleged depiction of the Jews in the movie as the Christ-killers. Those of us who are old enough can surely remember a time when any behavior that deviates from the abstemious during Holy Week is met with this sharp rebuke from our elders: "*Wag kang Hudyo!*"

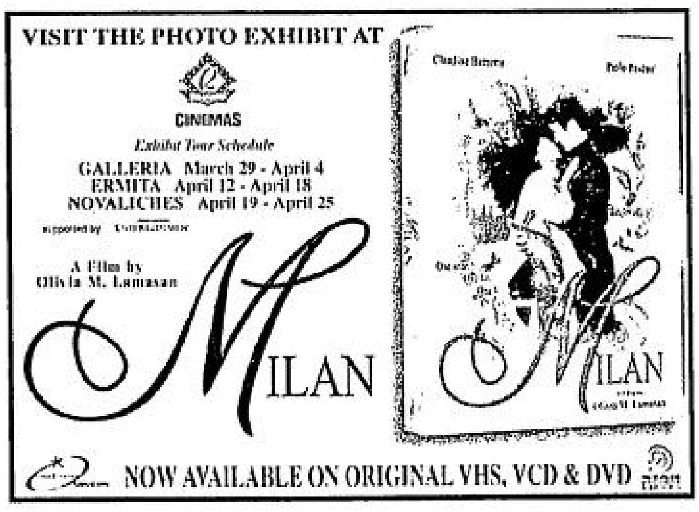
Erasing a stigma

The movie, I'm afraid, will do nothing to erase such a stigma. Jesus suffers terrible cruelty in the hands of the Jewish priests and the Romans get off easy when Jesus practically tells Pilate that it's not the latter's fault he's being persecuted. There's not a lot in the Gospels to suggest such interpretations by Gibson.

In fairness, there's not a lot in the Gospels either to suggest the other side of the "Jewish coin" that Gibson shows. Like how some of the chief priests paid a few scalawags (a la Edsa *tres*) to incite the crowd to cry for Jesus' crucifixion (and, even then, not all of them did). Or how some of the other priests tried to stop Jesus' sham trial but were driven out by the High Priest Caiaphas and his partisans. Clearly, not all the Jews in the movie were villainous. Jesus had many sympathizers among the crowd, fellow Jews like Simon of Cyrene and the women of Jerusalem, for example. Let's not forget that Jesus, his Apostles and disciples were all Jews.

"The Passion" may not be to everyone's taste but if you're prepared to get over the controversies, you'll probably find that there's more than enough in the movie to care about.

(The movie reviewer is a lay theology student at the Maryhill School of Theology.)



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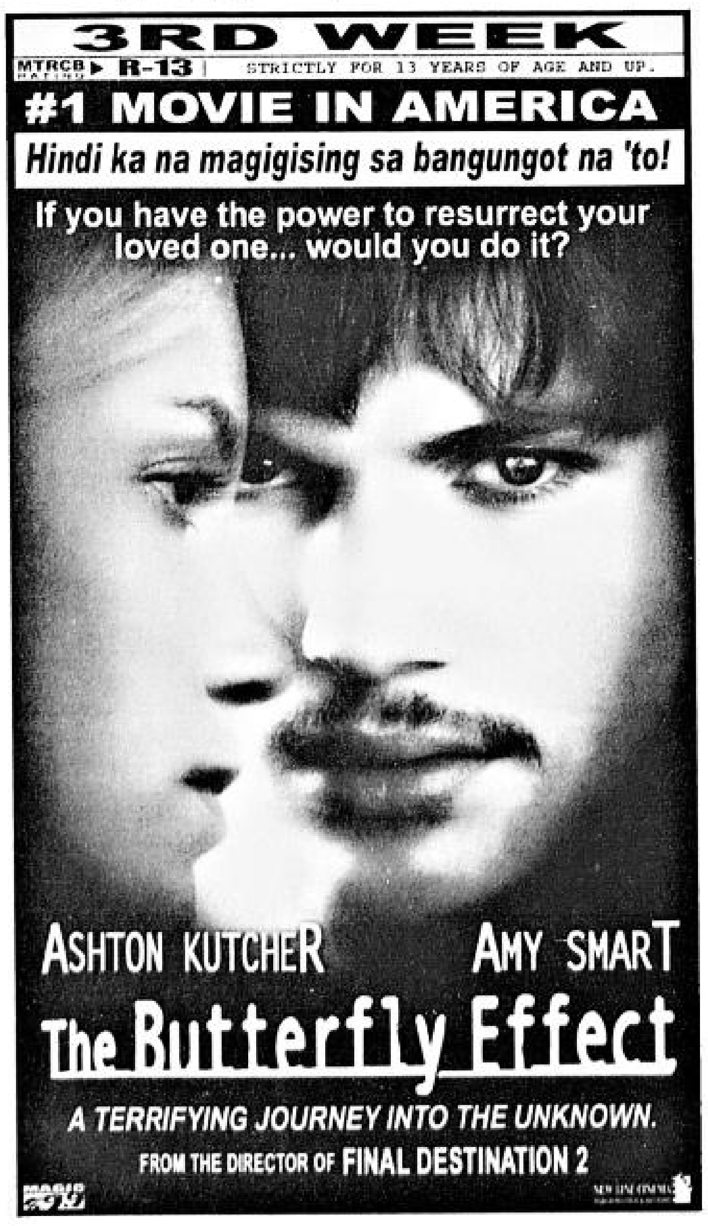

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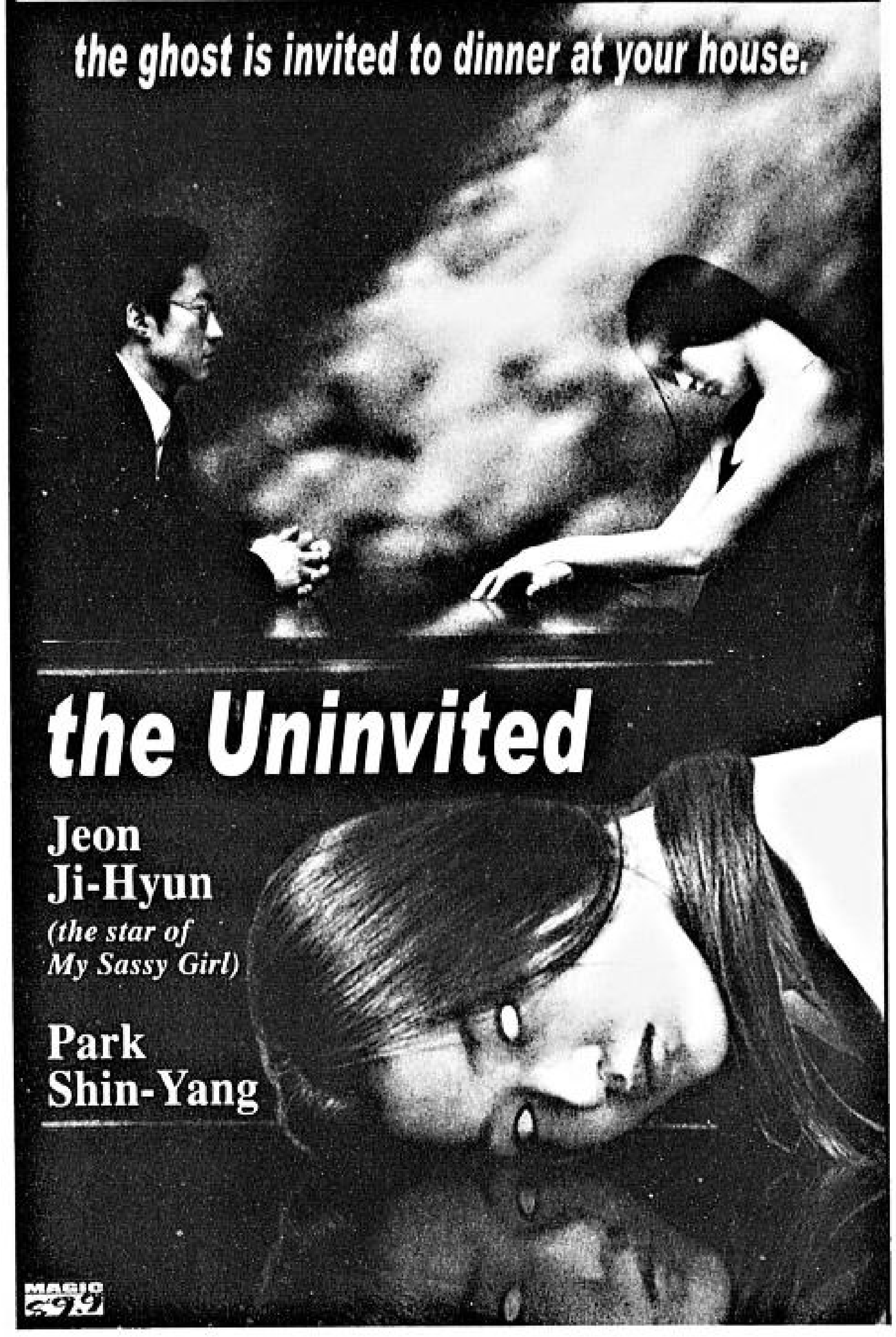
the ghost is invited to dinner at your house.
the Uninvited
Jeon Ji-Hyun
(the star of My Sassy Girl)
Park Shin-Yang
MAGIC 89.9

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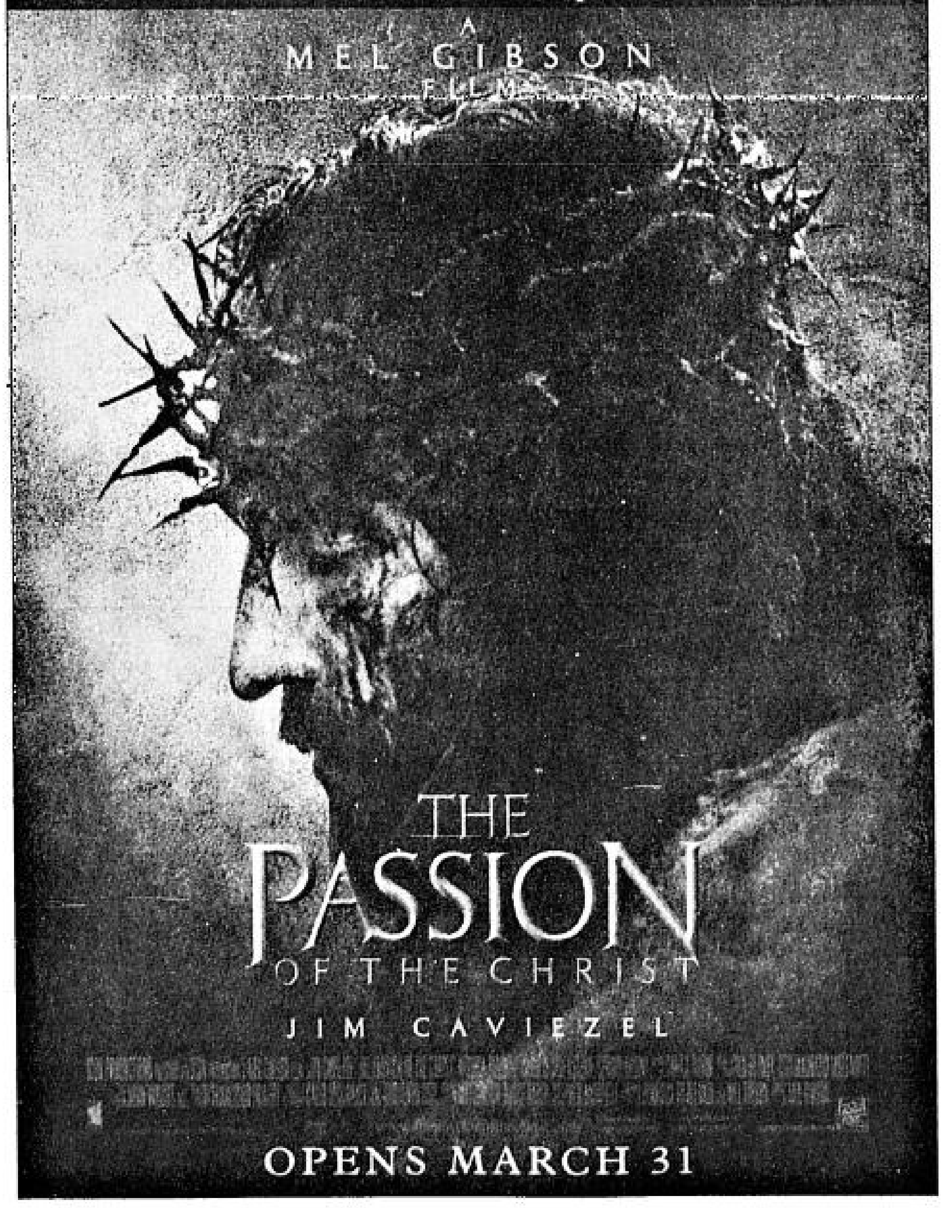
A MEL GIBSON FILM
THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST
JIM CAVIEZEL
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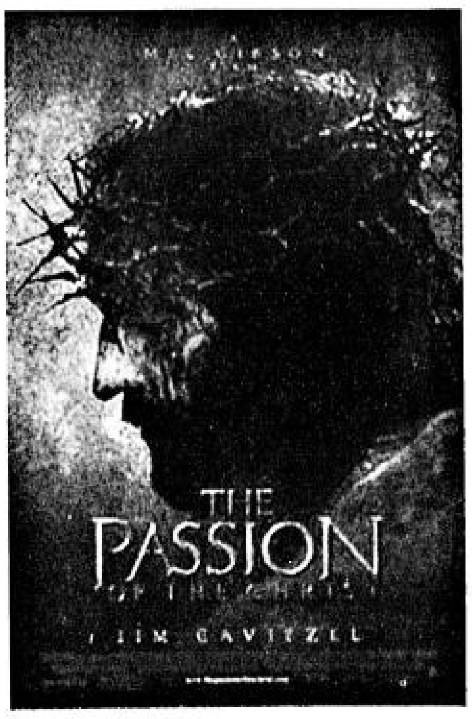
THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST
JIM CAVIEZEL

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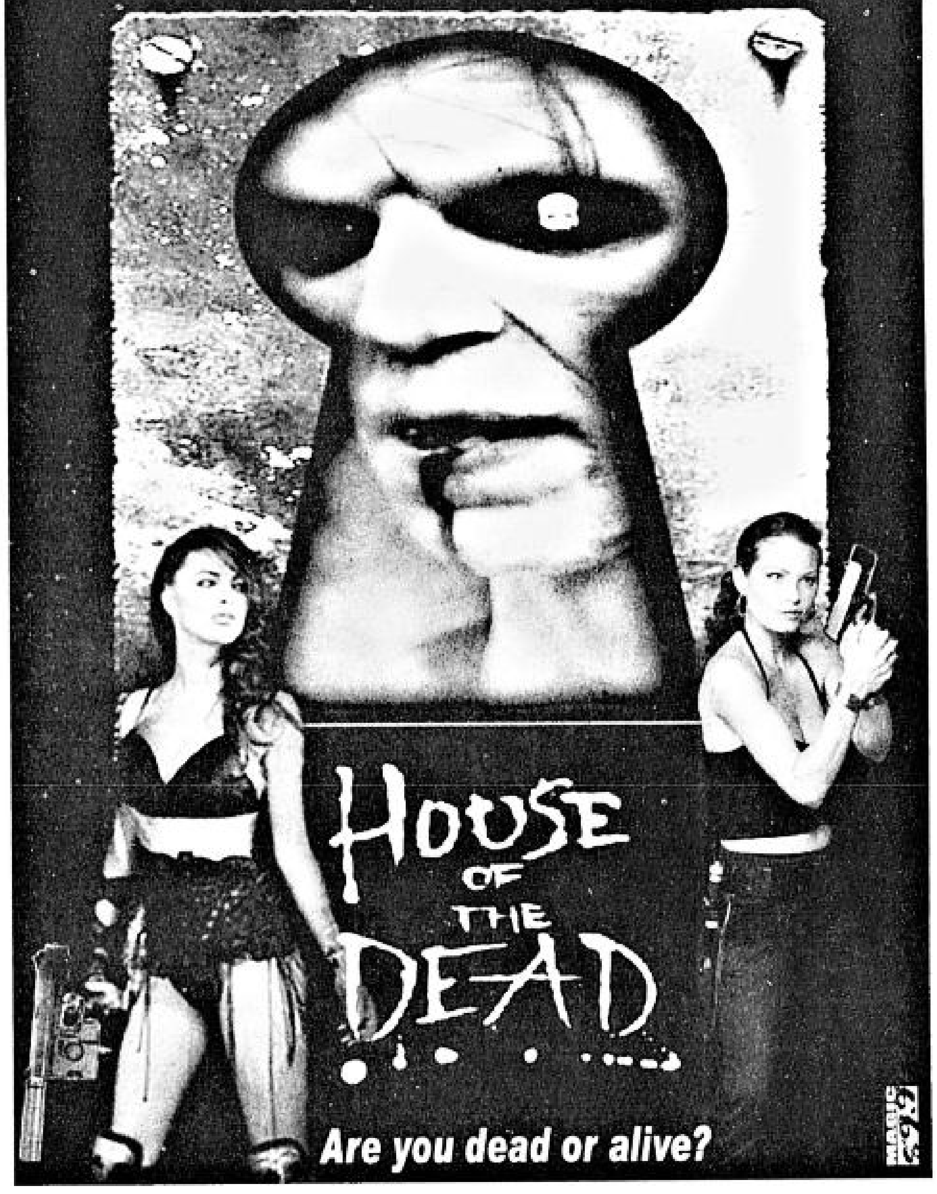
HOUSE OF THE DEAD
Are you dead or alive?
MAGIC 89.9

THE PASSION

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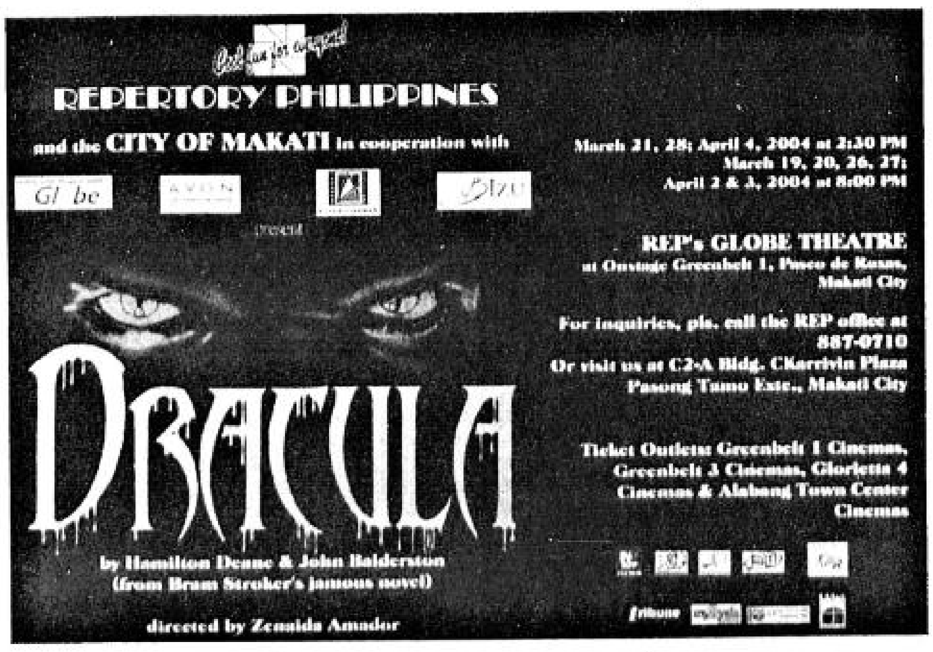
ICON AYALA CINEMAS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Tribune

Martin Nievera . . .

From page C1

of display.

"It's under the Philippine department, and I have pictures to prove it," said Martin.

"Twinky Lagdameo (of EMI Polyeast Records) was so *kulit* of letting the people in Tower Records know who I was and convinced them to sell some of my CDs," he said.

"There were seven titles and these are all that's left," he said, pointing to the pictures he displayed.

Wedding album

Now that Martin is back in Manila, he is busy promoting his newest album, "Best Wishes," a collection of wedding love songs under EMI Poly East Records.

The 17-track album, which Martin recorded in December last year, contains some of his most requested tunes, like "Forevermore," "You are my Song," "The Promise" and "Ikaw."

The idea for "Best Wishes" came about after he wrote "With You" for the wedding of newscasters Christine Bersola and Julius Babao, Martin said.

"I couldn't be at their wedding so I promised them that like Richard and Lucy, I'm going to write a song for them," Martin recalled.

Martin also wrote "Today" for actor Richard Gomez and his wife, Lucy Torres, who got married in January 1999.

"I don't usually do weddings unless you're a close friend or a part of the family," said Martin. "A lot of people get me to sing for them in weddings. Sometimes, I feel like a prostitute when they ask me how much I charge," he added in jest. "But it's also an honor. Like if I get married again, I would want Josh Groban to sing at my wedding. It's a special day, you will remember it for the rest of your life."

Asia Agcaoili . . .

From page C2

brown pair looks durable. Its something I'd wear when I go to combat."

Swimwear. "I made this yellow two-piece swimsuit as a school project. My assignment was to create an outfit for kids. I couldn't think of any. I thought making a swimsuit would be easy, but I was wrong. I had to sew two layers of fabrics together, do the piping and everything."

Belts and scarves. "I use them to accentuate my clothes. You know, I even have a pink belt that I use as a top.

"Scarves are multipurpose. There are some scarves that are big enough to be worn as skirts, tube tops or bandanas. You can get away with anything with scarves really.

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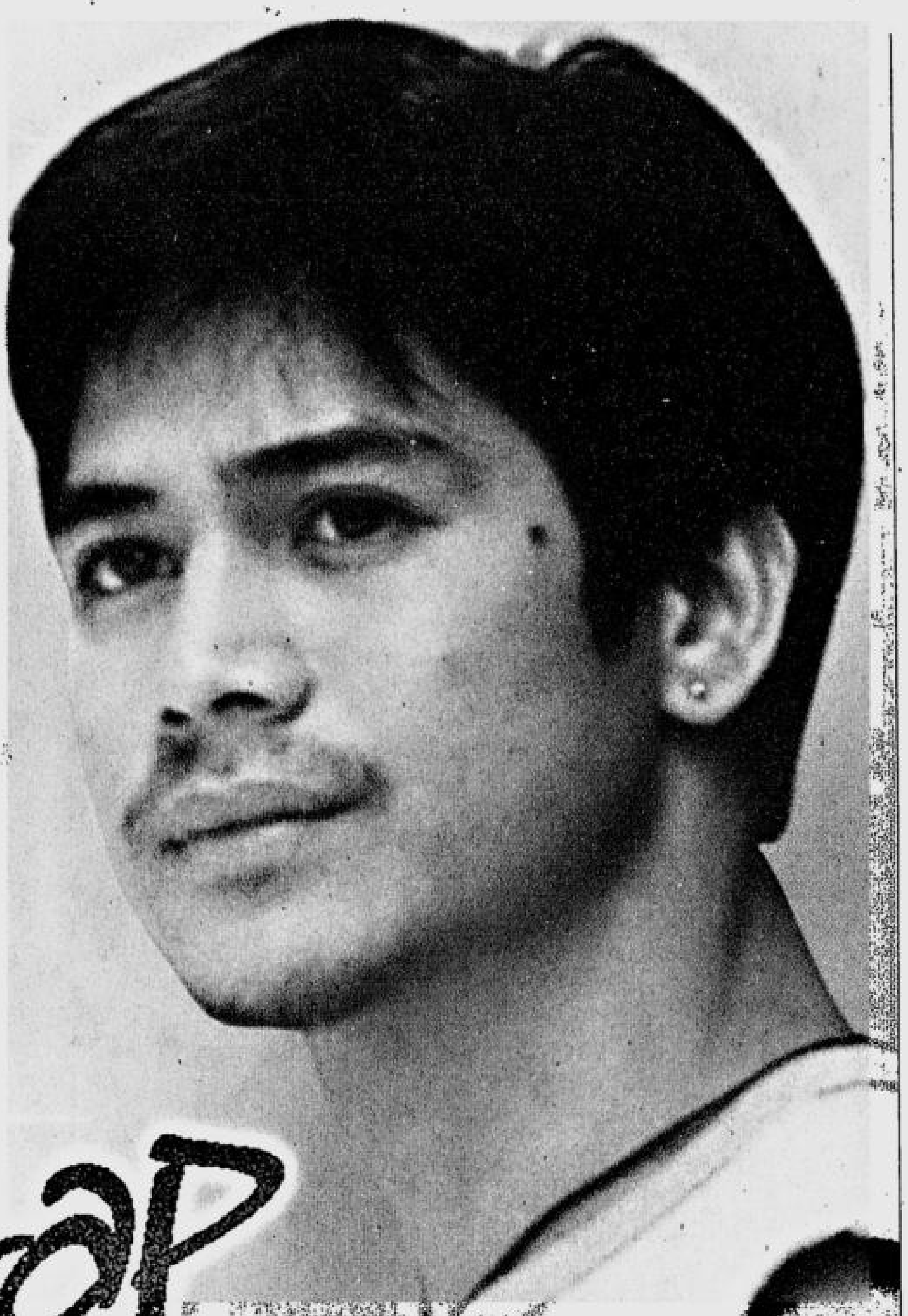

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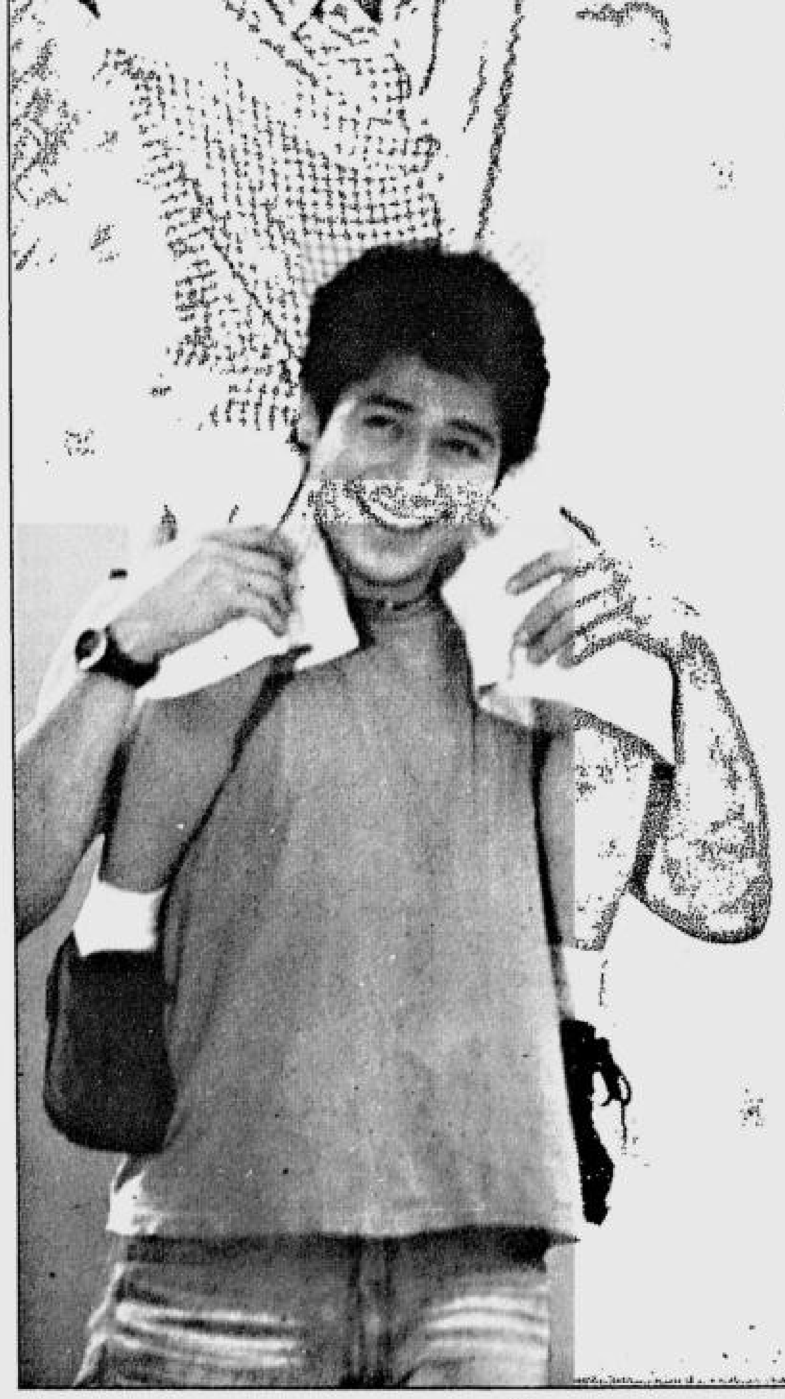

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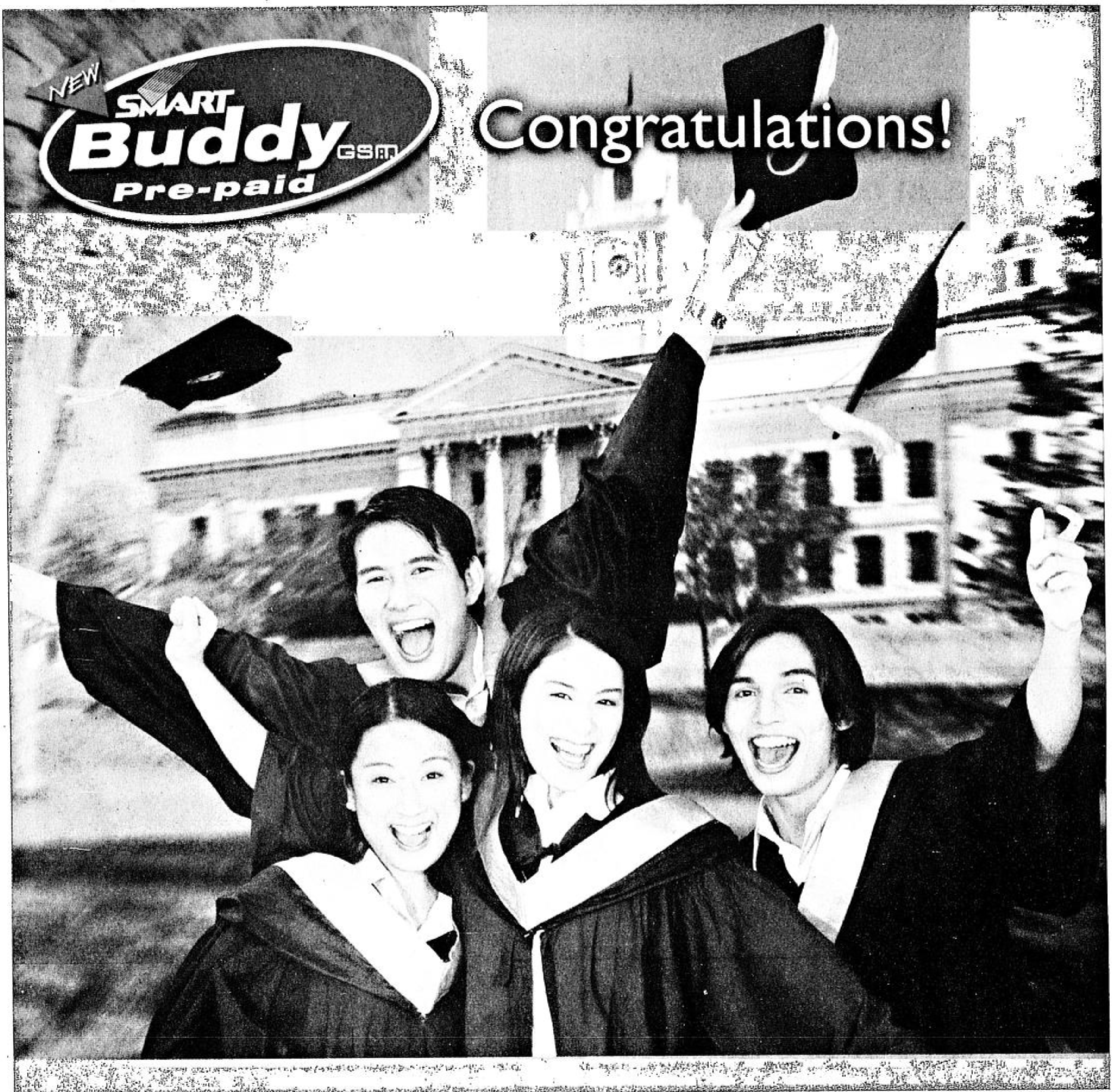

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Jackson 5	I'll Be There	GRAD5			

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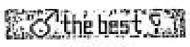
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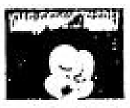
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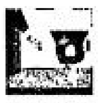
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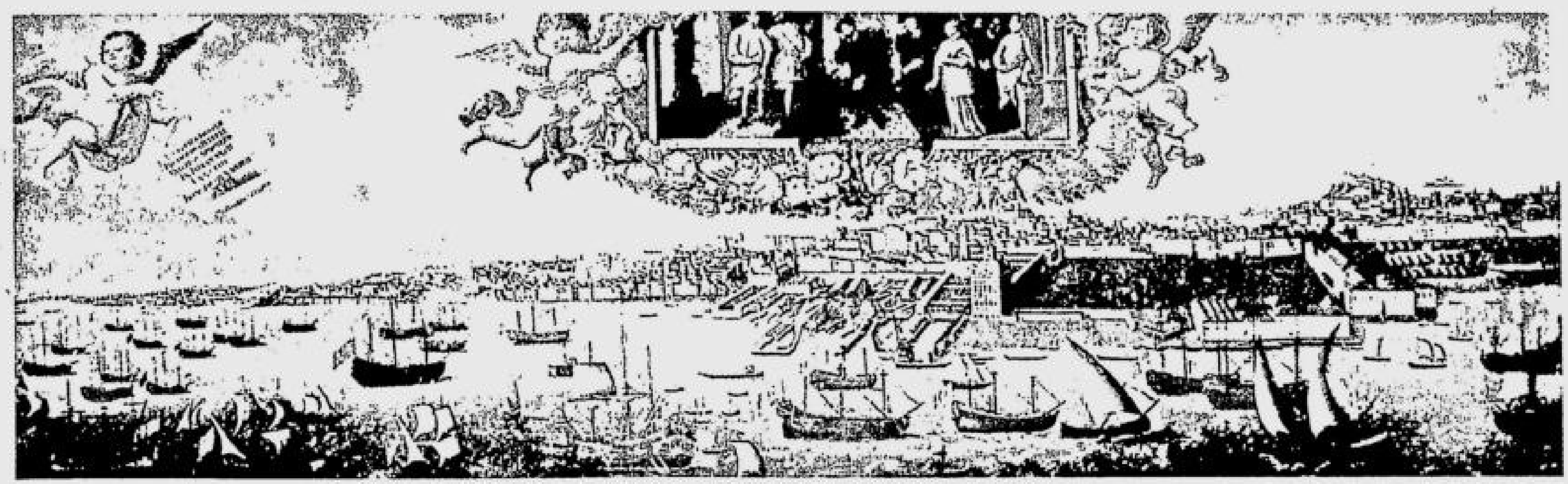
Return to owner

A three-day art meet in Singapore identifies projects to bring back valuable pieces from Europe to Asia

STORY ON PAGE D2



A PHOTO in the proposed "Self and Other: Portraits from Asia and Europe" shows a ship leaving for Portugal.

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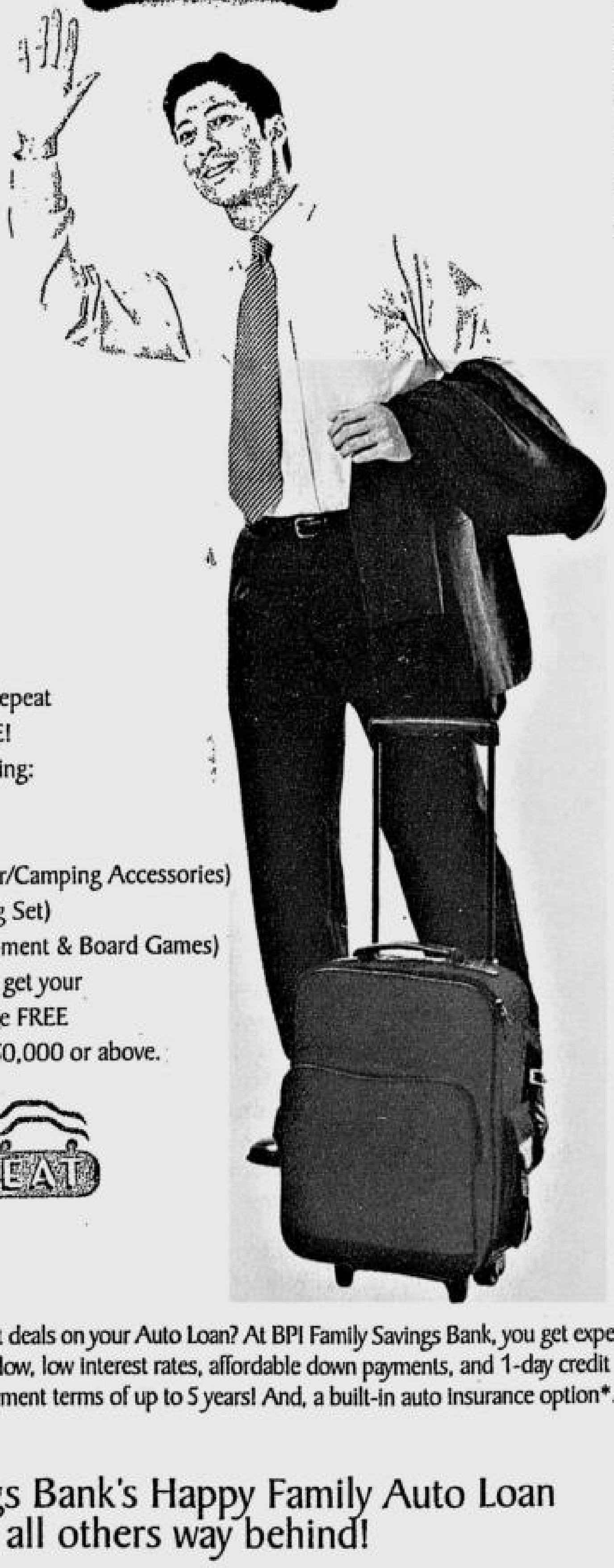

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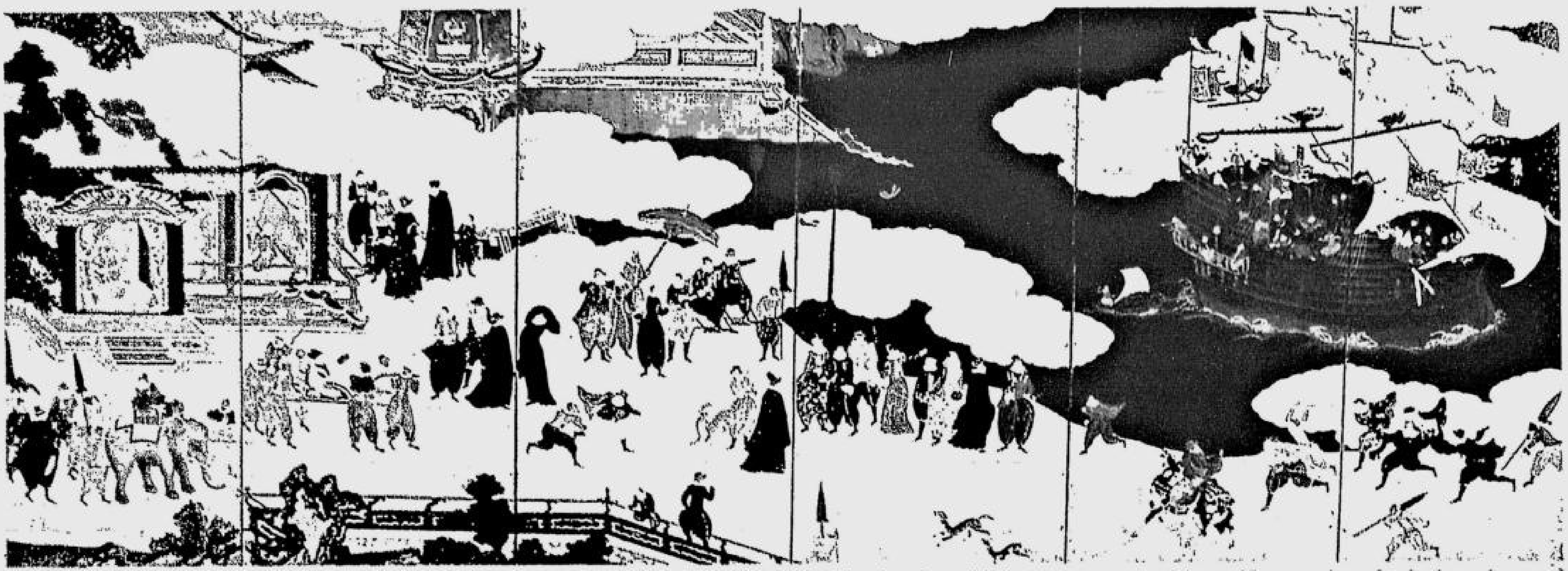

THE FOLLOW-UP photo to the one on page D1 shows the ship arriving in Japan. The proposed "Self and the Other" project aims to "challenge the stereotypes Asians and Europeans have of each other and themselves," the proponents say.

19TH-century photograph of a Peranakan, which refers to "locally born" Chinese, Indian and Eurasian communities in Southeast Asia

Return to owner

By James P. Ong
Contributor

ON A RECENT weekend, the basement of the Asian Civilizations Museum in Singapore was transformed into a marketplace—of ideas, that is. The "vendors" were curators, art experts and museum professionals from Asia and Europe. The "buyers" were politicians, top executives, envoys and other potential cultural sponsors taking heed of the dictum "businesses flourish were culture is nourished."

"Museum Hopping," as the conference was titled, was organized by the Asia-Europe Museum Network, established four years ago in Stockholm, and composed of some 60 museums from both continents. The group aims to facilitate the sharing of Eurasian cultural heritage.

The event was a fund-raising drive to support eight key projects set to fix the "asymmetry in museum collections." At the same time, it sought to encourage the participation of private corporations. "They say when artists gather, they talk about money. When businessmen gather, they talk about art," joked Dr. Lee Boon Yang, Singapore's minister for information, communication and the arts, during the official opening.

"The private sector [should] recognize that supporting a museum or heritage project can raise the standing of their organizations," Singapore's National Heritage Board head Lim Siok Peng said. "[It] is a very meaningful way that good corporate citizens can give back value to the communities in which they operate."

At the event, booths were set up—each one housing a proposed cultural project to help museums reach out to a younger and wider audience.

Back in Asia's arms

"A museum can change the world," said Kenji Yoshida, a professor at the National Museum of Ethnology in Japan and one of the participants. He also warned that "one-sided presentations of cultural images mean museums are forming only one view of the world."

According to Vernetta Belarmino, a Filipina project officer at Asemus, Museum Hopping hopes to raise around 10 million euros for its projects, some of which need as short as three years to complete.

It is a fact that art meets say a lot about upcoming trends in the cultural scene; much more so if attendees of these gatherings are composed of heritage and museum specialists from different countries.

If "Museum Hopping" is any indication, then, in five or so years, Asia can expect to see more of its cultural artifacts—kept safely in the hands of European institutions—exhibited right here in her own shores.

"History shows an unfair distribution of artworks," said Belarmino. "I am very happy that, finally, we will be sharing resources."

Philippine pasts

One of the projects directly involving the Philippines is entitled "Unearthing Philippine Pasts in European Museums." This proposed four-year research is set to start this year and will facilitate the transfer of around 3,000 ethnographical objects.

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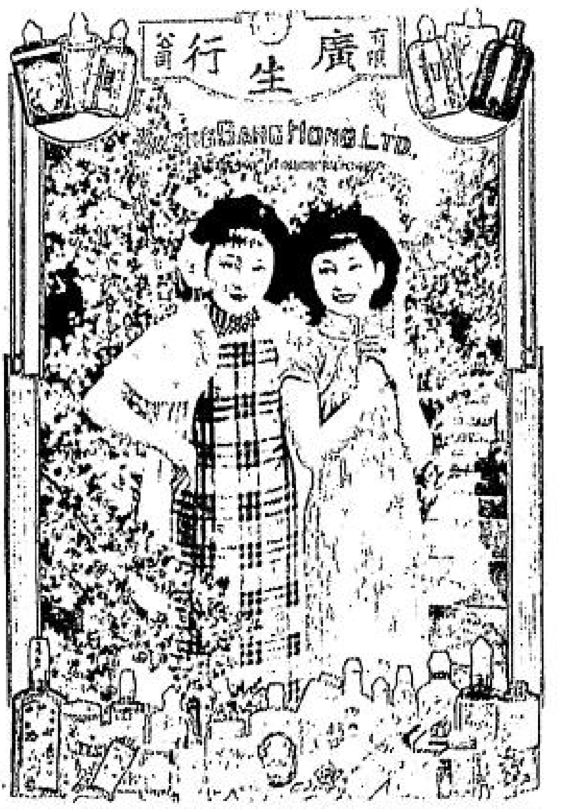
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IN THE PROPOSED “Self and Other” project, some 200 portraits of people from the East and West will be put side by side to examine perceptions of race and identity. (Left) A print ad in Japan for Max Factor, and (above) a Chinese poster for a range of beauty products

Educational programs, traveling exhibitions, lectures and workshops will be initiated to encourage cultural communities in reviving their tradition. The production of some cultural objects will also be supported.

Philippine National Museum’s Corazon Alvina and Hamburg Museum’s Wulf Kopke spearhead the project. They will collaborate with institutions in Antwerp, Gothenburg, Leiden and Paris for this research.

Secrets of Borobodur

Another proposal linked to the Philippines is the “Peranakan Research Project,” which Ayala Museum is supporting. “Since we have analogous phenomena in the Philippines with the Chinese mestizo community, we thought it would be a good partnership,” explained Ayala Museum director Florina Capistrano-Baker.

Peranakan is a Malay term that literally translates to “locally born.” The Peranakans are Chinese, Indian and Eurasian communities long established in Southeast Asia. In Singapore, they refer mostly to early Chinese settlers who’ve intermarried with Malays.

The project’s task is to lay the foundations for representation of the Peranakan culture not only in Southeast Asia, but also in Europe, by bringing the scattered collections and communities together. “Part of this project is trying to identify which are the Peranakan material that are already in various collections but labeled simply as Filipino, Chinese or Malay,” said Baker.

Also to look forward to is “Records of the Hidden Base of Borobodur,” which plans to exhibit newly collected photographs and written records pertaining to the famous Indonesian cultural monument—and which promises to answer unresolved mysteries about its past. It will take three years to complete, and will be developed by Indonesian and Dutch museums.

Stereotypes

The most provocative project, however, is “Self and Other: Portraits from Asia and Europe,” which will put side by side some 200 portraits of people from the East and West to challenge the stereotypes Asians and Europeans have of each other and of themselves.

This exhibition will travel to eight different venues in Asia and Europe from 2006 to 2007. The leading curatorial team will come from Brunei, China, Japan, Malaysia, The Netherlands, Singapore and the UK.

An example cited in this project is a 1973 Max Factor print ad that shows an American brunette, hung beside a poster for a range of Chinese beauty products showing two Chinese lasses; one dressed in a Burberry-print shift dress, the other in a stylish *cheongsam*. Who’s to say which photo best captures femininity and beauty, the imperturbability of the West or the ebullience of the East?

Virtual museum

One of the more exciting and ambitious proposals involves putting up a virtual exhibition of masterpieces. According to Masatoshi Kubo, director of information and professor of Japan’s National Museum of Ethnology, they plan to build a portal for some 5,000 masterpieces available from 25 countries in Asia and Europe.

“We will not be limited to ancient works,” he explained. “We will also include modern inventions which we consider art.” Apart from paintings and sculptures, they are also looking into products that indicate high levels of craftsmanship, such as dolls, automobiles and other utilitarian objects.

The brains behind this project believe the virtual museum “will be an excellent means to promote knowledge about different cultures and provide easy access to information, especially to families and young people keen on the Web than the traditional public museums.”

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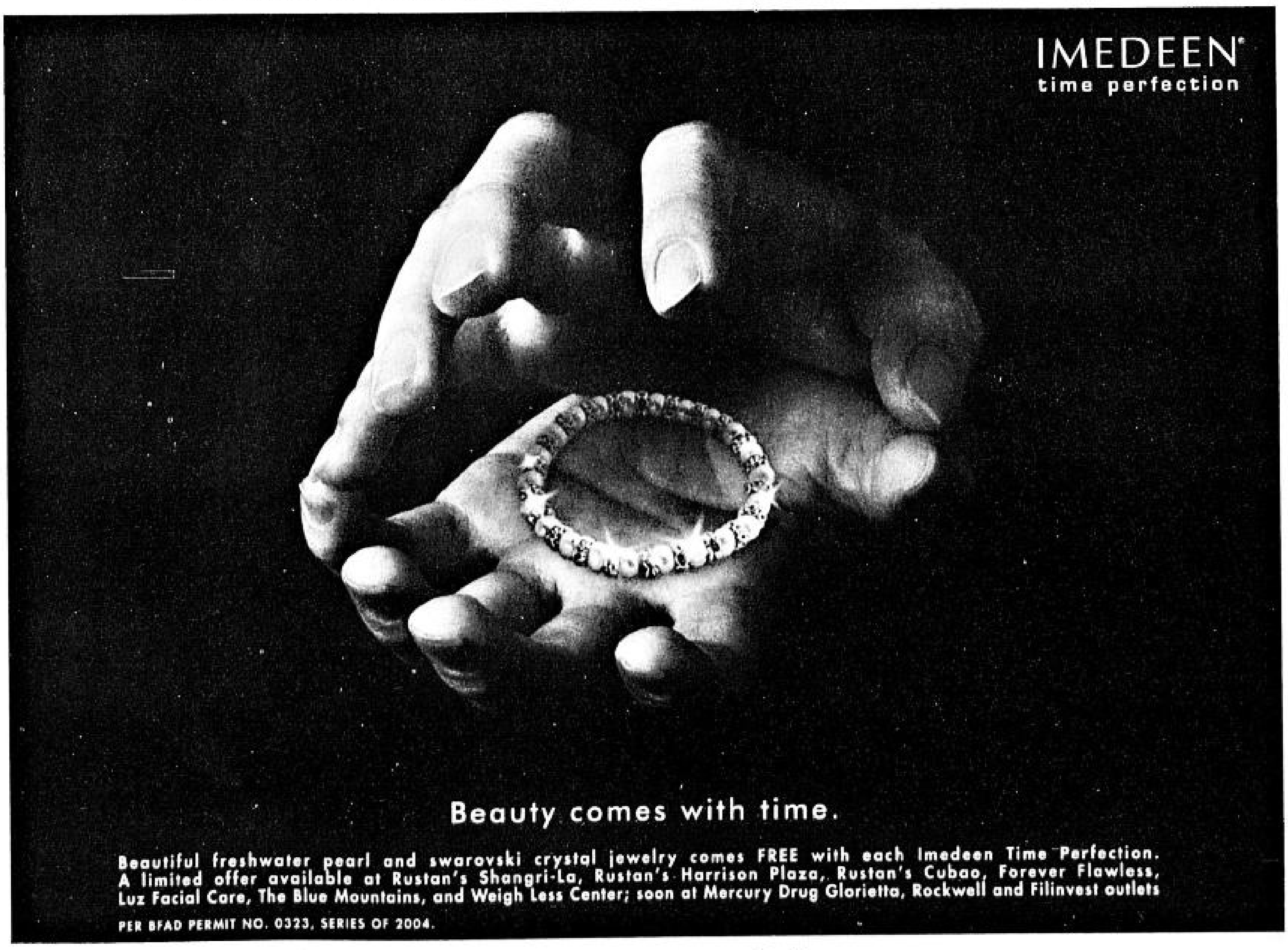
Imedeen Time Perfection was recently launched in the Philippines and is available at selected department stores and beauty centers. For more information, check out www.imedeen.com.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EDUCATION REVOLUTION

Teachers must bring out the best in students

By Butch Hernandez
Contributor

"WE must teach the young to respect the authority of truth, not the simple authority of age. We, their elders, must respect [their] independence of mind, their freedom to think differently from us," said Commissioner Cristina D. Padolina of the Commission on Higher Education (CHEd).

Padolina made the remarks as she opened the Mentoring the Mentors sessions conducted recently by the Foundation for Worldwide People Power (FWWPP) for the Philippine Association for Teacher Education (Pafte) at the Hospitaler Sisters of Mercy Retreat House in Tagaytay City.

Speaking before senior executives and administrators from 13 regions, Padolina said, "It is our obligation as administrators of educational institutions and as teachers to provide the environment in our schools, colleges and universities that would allow our students to explore and exercise their creativity."

CHED Commissioner Cristina D. Padolina (center) with FWWPP Mentoring the Mentors program director Stella "Chinit" Rufino (left) and national coordinator Evelyn A. Mejillano

SGV founder Washington Sycip

PAFTE is a national organization of colleges and universities offering the Bachelor of Science in Education degree program.

The FWWPP's Mentoring the Mentors program is the capacity-building component of the Education Revolution. It consists of five days of intensive experiential sessions aimed at revitalizing the nurturing dimension of teaching.

Last year, the FWWPP's pilot sessions for the Davao City schools division was very well received by both participants and observers alike, among them representatives of Pafte.

This year, the FWWPP and Pafte signed an agreement to implement the Mentoring the Mentors program nationally through the association's national network of facilitators.

"If we simply teach students facts, if we treat their minds like savings banks that we just make deposits to, we will not develop thinking individuals. We must teach our children to have inquiring, analytical and critical minds," Padolina said.

"The word education comes from the Latin word *educere*, which means to bring out. The educator is obligated not simply to bring out, but to bring out the best among our students. We have to start with cultivating and nurturing an inquiring mind as early as possible. Children are naturally curious and inquiring, [because] it is for them the only way to know the world. [As teachers] we must see to it that we do not quench this natural way of knowing,"

PAFTE senior executives and school administrators from 13 regions during the Mentoring the Mentors sessions at the Hospitaler Sisters of Mercy in Tagaytay City

State of education

Washington Sycip, the illustrious founder of the Sycip, Gorres, Velayo (SGV) auditing firm, has always championed the cause of quality basic education. Sycip and SGV co-founder and co-University of Sto. Tomas alumnus Fred Velayo came from public schools. They were classmates at the Burgos Elementary School from Grade I. Sycip got his secondary education at V. Mapa High School.

Addressing over a hundred senior executives of corporate foundations, non-government organizations, advocacy groups and local government units at the first State of Education Conference recently at the Asian Institute of Management Convention Center, Sycip said improving the quality and delivery of basic education was crucial. "A drop-out is handicapped for life," he said.

The Synergeia Foundation, with Fr. Bienvenido Nebres, SJ, of the Ateneo de Manila University as chair of the board and Nene Guevarra as president, organized the conference.

In the same forum, Education Secretary Edilberto de Jesus gave an honest appraisal of the existing public education system. Citing the DepEd's own research findings, de Jesus showed conference participants the many inadequacies of public education today, from school buildings to textbooks, to teacher training and the curriculum, all of which seriously affected the learner's academic achievement.

De Jesus said he had been exploring ways to mobilize private resources and community support to help improve public schools even before he became education secretary. This is a core advocacy of the Foundation for Worldwide People Power, where de Jesus was a founding trustee before he became secretary.

Gov. Rolando Agbayani of Nueva Vizcaya discussed the vital role of the local government in bringing quality education to the community.

Wendy Puriefoy of the United States-based Public Education Network pointed out that because of globalization, the quality of education became more important than ever.

Capacity and competency in education attracted capital and corporations, Puriefoy said. She pointed out that while there was not enough private money to meet public education's needs, private capital could be used to leverage public support because education was a public value.

Puriefoy emphasized the community's pivotal role in raising the quality of public education. Public schools were only as good as the public wanted them to be, she said.

UP Press launches book of rondalla arrangements

THE UNIVERSITY of the Philippines Press recently released a pioneering book, "Rondalla Arrangements of Filipino Folk Dances," by Edna Aurora Culig.

The landmark volume addresses the scarcity of rondalla music scores despite their growing popularity, not just nationally but internationally. The book was launched during the International Rondalla Festival held recently in Naga and Legazpi in Bicol.

Culig provides rondalla scores for 12 Philippine folk dances, with most of the pieces arranged in six parts—bandurria 1, bandurria 2, laud, octavina, guitar and bass. Estudiantina arrangements are done for the rest of the pieces for richer timbre and texture. There are also suggested levels of difficulty assigned to each piece.

A UP faculty member, Culig is the founder and director of the UP Rondalla Ensemble.

The book, priced at P1,000, is now available at the UP Press Bookstore at Balay Kalinaw in UP Diliman and will be available at National Bookstore and PowerBooks branches next month.

Call for nominees to UP alumni awards

THE UNIVERSITY of the Philippines Alumni Association (UPAA) Search Committee 2004 awaits more nominations to the 2004 UPAA Awards, after extending the deadline to March 31. To date, more than 35 nominations have been received.

The award honors outstanding alumni who have excelled in their own fields of endeavor, thus bringing honor to the university and the country.

The categories are: Most Distinguished Alumnus and/or Alumna Award, Lifetime Distinguished Achievement Award, Outstanding Professional Award, Community Service Awards, UPAA Service Awards, Outstanding Alumni Chapter Award, Special Recognition Award and Outstanding 2004 Graduate Award.

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Church patrimony in Taal being destroyed

Why should an adoration chapel be constructed when the Taal Church, perhaps the biggest in Asia, has several chapels within it?

PRIDE OF PLACE

Augusto F. Villalon

WHAT is happening to the Basilica of Saint Martin of Tours in Taal, Batangas is a heritage nightmare. But it is nothing new.

Bishop Jose Salazar, the new parish priest, is constructing a perpetual adoration chapel in what once was the courtyard of Taal Church. Without a doubt there is a need for the chapel and the parishioners of Taal deserve one.

But should it be in the courtyard? Definitely not.

By virtue of Presidential Decree 1505, the National Historical Institute has declared Taal Church a Historical Monument. Therefore, the law protects Taal Church from unauthorized alterations.

The National Museum and the National Commission for Culture and the Arts have jointly named the Taal Church as one of the 26 National Treasures of the country. That should be pedigree enough for the Basilica of Saint Martin of Tours.

The integrity of monuments like the Taal Church deserves respect and should be protected from alterations and remodeling. PD 1505 states that any alteration or modification in a declared historic site can only be undertaken after consultation with the NHI.

Concerned Taaleños from the Taal Charm Foundation, the Blessed Virgin of Caysasay Foundation, and the Taal Heritage Foundation wrote to Bishop Leopoldo Tumulak, who chairs the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines' Permanent Committee for the Cultural Heritage of the Church, as well as to Manila Archbishop (and immediate Batangas Archbishop) Gaudencio Rosales, to NHI Chairman Ambeth Ocampo, and to the NCCA National Committee on Monuments and Sites chairman Regalado Trota José. They asked that the construction of the chapel be stopped.

The NHI, in response, wrote a letter to Salazar, suggesting that the Taal Convento is a large structure and surely some room could be found within it for the planned chapel. Another alternative is to construct a chapel on the open space to the left of the church where light and ventilation would not be blocked.

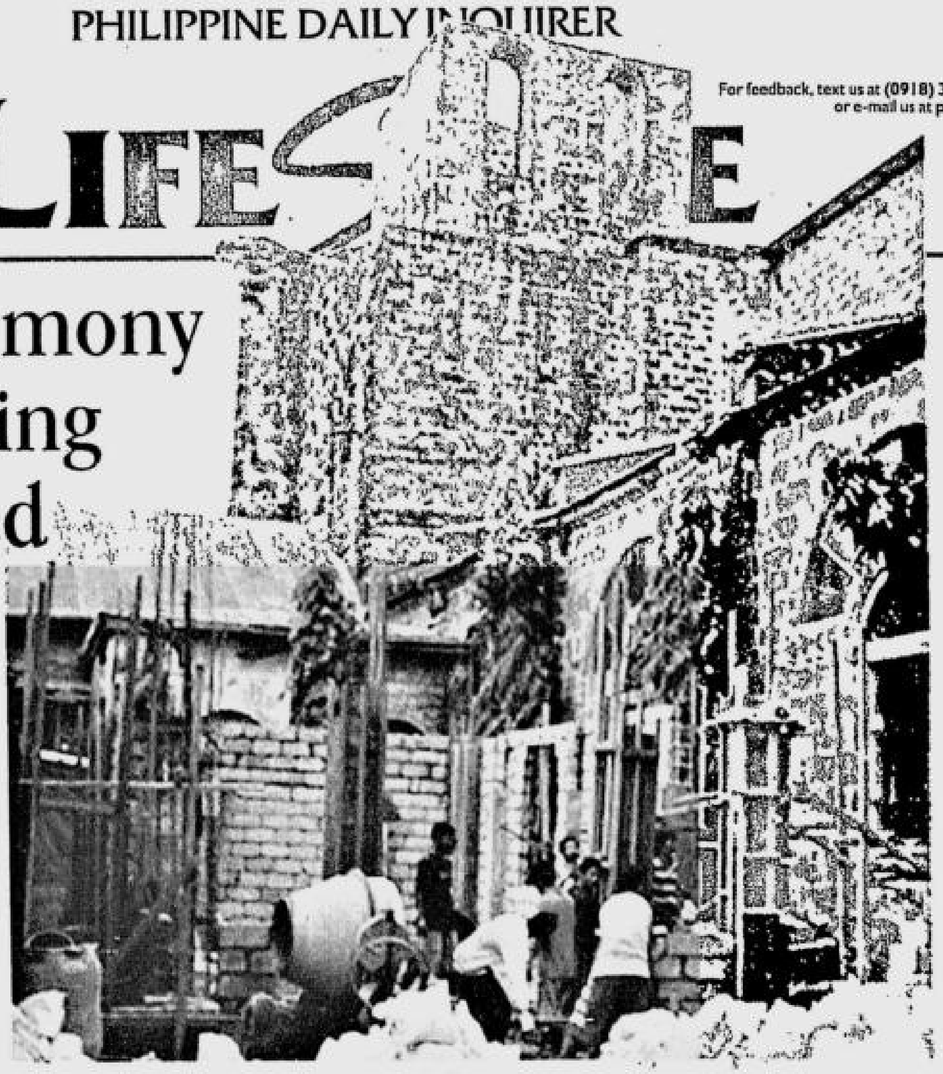
The bishop has not responded to the letter.

Despite international and national law stipulating that church structures as much as possible should be kept in their original state, the construction at the basilica of Taal is a common occurrence in most churches all over the country where unguided "renovation" or "upgrading" does more irreparable damage to the church than what the parish priest or his parish council could ever imagine.

Because of misguided upgrading and insensitive additions of adoration chapels to old churches, the Philippines has lost so much of its Spanish colonial heritage.

Canon law

Unknown to many Filipinos, canon (or church) law strongly protects the patrimony of the Catholic Church.



THE ADORATION Chapel walls are being built of concrete despite the fact that concrete reacts violently with the traditional lime construction used in the Taal church building.

Pope John Paul II created the Pontifical Commission for Preserving the Patrimony of Art and History in 1988. In 1993 the Commission was renamed the Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Heritage of the Church, which directs the clergy to preserve church heritage because of its importance in keeping religious practices and history alive.

To make the next generation of priests aware of their responsibility to preserve church heritage, the CBCP Permanent Committee for the

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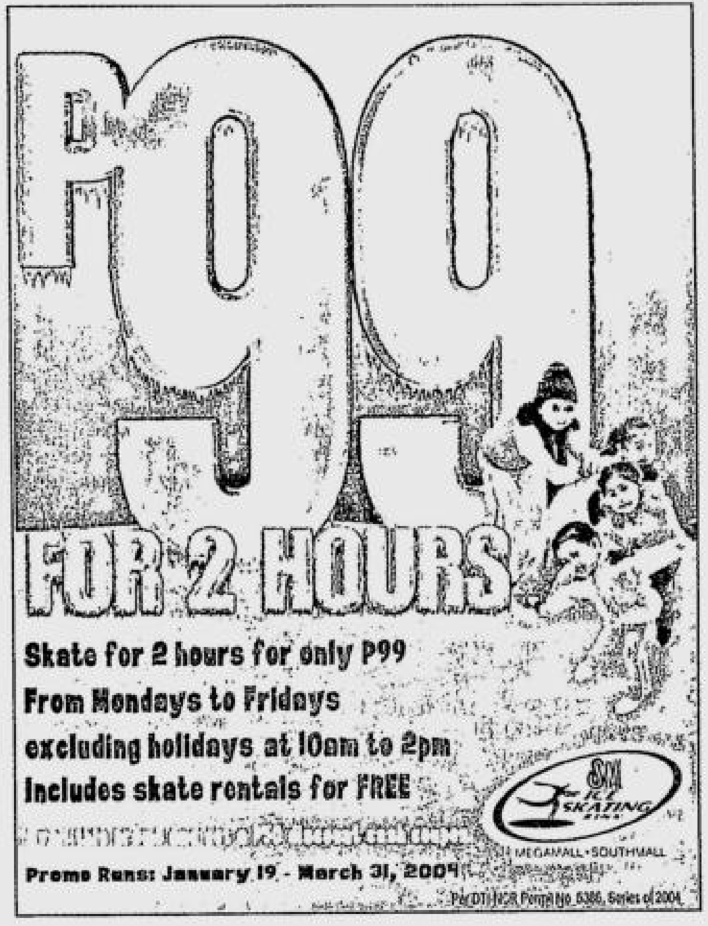
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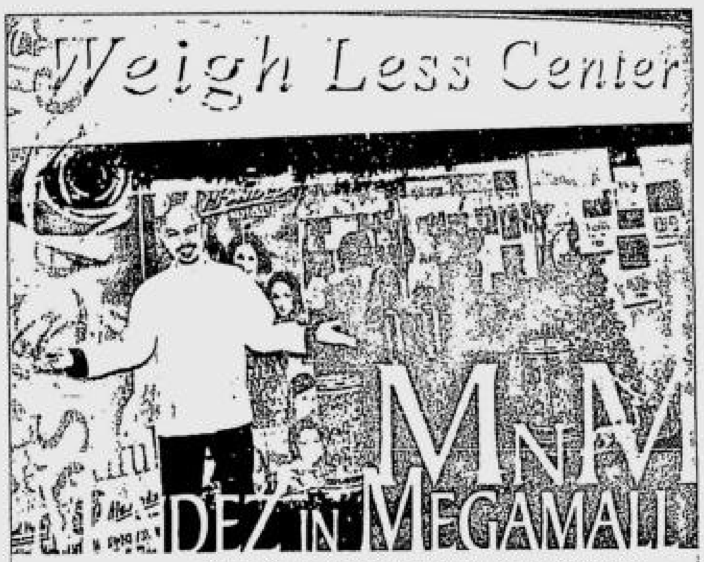
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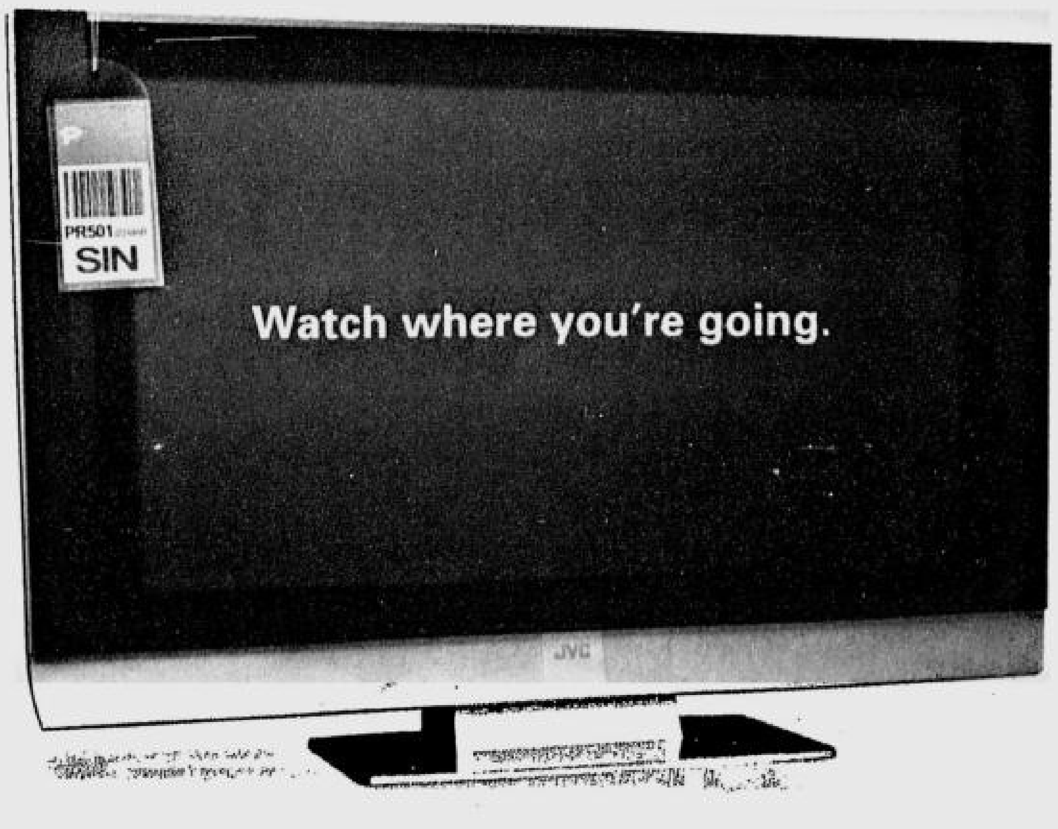

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BATANGAS knives are shown to the group at the craft center.

KIT Zobel with *subli* dancers in front of Mahal na Poon

Back to Batangas

ALL4ART

Bea Zobel Jr.

"GIVE me one day of your life to allow me to share with you my passion for our country through the arts," I pleaded with the Friends of the Metropolitan Museum of Manila. I was trying to persuade them to join me on a trip around Batangas.

We agreed to meet in the lobby of my apartment. The fateful day arrived. I had prepared the cooler of drinks plus *pandesals* and *barquillos* to fill up hungry stomachs so early in the morning. Not expecting a good turnout due to the early hour and family obligations, I went down to meet the bus.

Lo and behold, I came upon Marissa, Karina and Saddie fast asleep on the sofa while waiting for the group. I was ecstatic! More and more people began to appear.

MAT weaving at the craft center

We first stopped at the church of San Jose town. (I lie. We first stopped for a morning coffee due to a general clamor from the caffeine addicts on the bus.) We admired the beautiful ceiling decorations painted on metal sheets. The whole church was a medley of green and pink. It turned out that the next day was the town fiesta! Our guests had quite a treat seeing all that was being set up in anticipation of the celebration.

We headed for Batangas City. We were greeted by Gov. Mandanas' warm smile. He was attired in a dashing mauve barong. He insisted we see his provincial museum which we got by crossing a park lined with statues of Batangueño heroes. We were also very fortunate to meet the historian Tony Pastor who kindly offered to show us his lovely home. Due to our tight schedule we had to ask if we could take him up on his invitation another time.

We departed with generous gifts of fans and barong from the governor, gifts we should have been the ones to give him as it was his birthday. I am afraid we could only offer a song—sung in more voices than needed! After our performance it was off to Bauan to watch the *subli*.

The *subli* is an incredible example of living heritage. It is danced by men and women bringing together movement, poetry and prayer to the sound of a drum. We were all mesmerized. As one of our companions, Anita Tortorici commented to Metropolitan Museum director Ino Manalo, the *subli* seemed so simple, the dancers seemed to float so effortlessly, yet it was really quite complex!

The *subli* is beautifully illustrated and explained in a book put together by Elena Rivera Mirano and Marian Roces. You could earn a PhD just by reading this book as it is so well researched! The dance itself usually lasts many hours but we were shown a shortened version of 20 minutes. It was performed in front of the Mahal Na Poon, the legendary wood and silver cross of Bauan. Usually the Poon is only brought out during special occasions. We were so fortunate that Fr. Roy Reyes gave permission for the exposition of the Poon.

Impressive

What is especially impressive is that the *subli* is being passed down to future generations. I salute the Cultural Committee of the city of Batangas who initiated the *subli* competition. Due to programs like this, young people have expressed the desire to learn the dance. This is a perfect and rare example of Philippine heritage, community pride and identity revitalized.

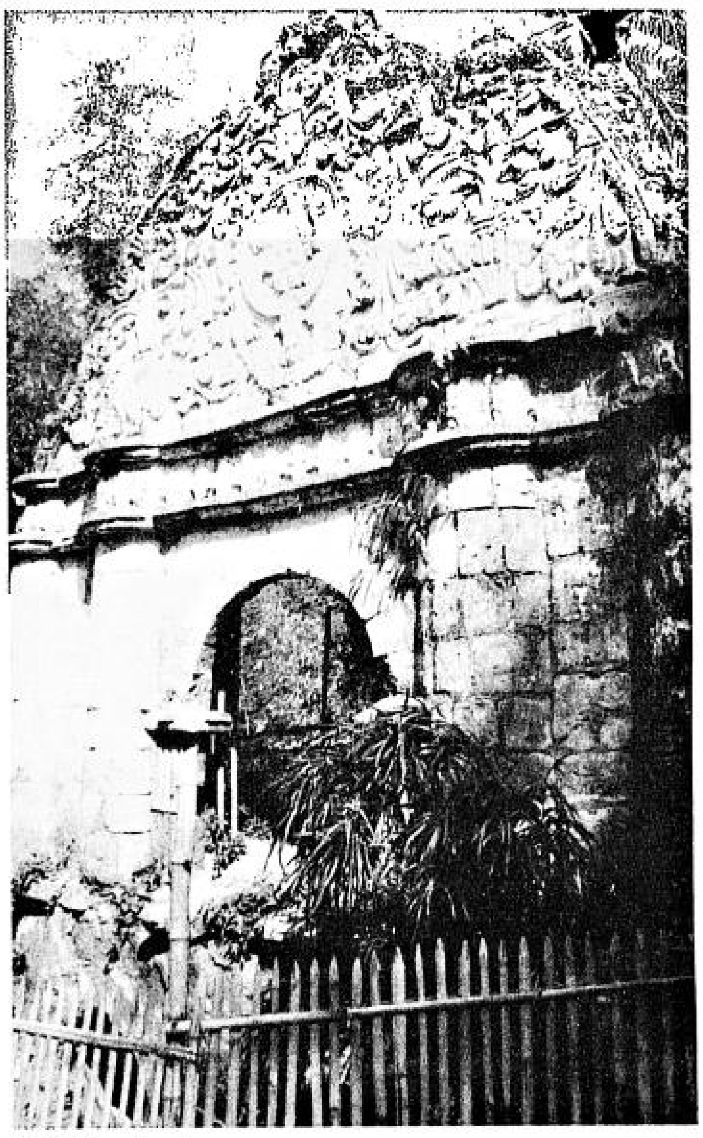
Ino told me that recent scholarship seemed to indicate that the *subli* was somehow related to the exodus of the Batangas towns away from Taal Lake. What a story! Many of the Batangas towns such as Taal, Bauan and Lipa used to be situated right on the shores of Taal Lake. Unfortunately, Taal Volcano (in the middle of the lake) kept on erupting, bringing much destruction.

Finally after an especially devastating eruption in 1754, the people said "*Tama na! Sobra na!*" and moved away from the lake and its violent mountain. Can you just imagine it: People traveling through the night, carrying what they were able to salvage of their belongings, trying to find a safe haven even as the volcano is erupting in the background. Perhaps the *subli* was danced as a prayer for salvation from nature's fury. Knowing the story makes watching the performance even more touching.

THE *SUBLI* dancers with the group watching

Taal moved from the lake to the area of one of its barrios—Caysasay. Evidently the people threw themselves into rebuilding their lives. As we drove through Taal's plaza en route to lunch, one look at the great church and the lovely houses tells you that the Taaleños have overcome the ordeals of their past. Lunch was served at the Casa Punzalan where three distinguished ladies Mesdames Tolentino, Nita Ilagan and Mini Samonte plied us with *adobo sa dilaw*, *tapang* Taal, *inihaw na tilapia*, *bulanglang* and *tulingan*. However, I will hold them to their promise that they would bring back that beautiful house to its former Batangueño glory!

The two 19th century houses of Doña Gliceria Marella Villavicencio awaited us. It was wonderful to see the expressions of our guests as they entered. A great sense of pride filled me knowing that we had these two showcases of our heritage as preserved by cousins, Ernie Villavicencio, Baby Quiblat and their families. I am afraid I made myself too much at home! With the wonderful breeze that was coming in, I stayed stuck to a chair by the window in a daze. Leigh, Sevrine and I had not realized that the group had left an hour before! We had been forgotten!



SANTA Lucia arch

PHOTOS: MARISSA FLOIRENDO AND PETER NATIVIDAD

We caught up with the group descending the stairs to Santa Lucia arch. The arch is made of sea stone and is beautifully carved. Finding it in the middle of the woods makes you feel that it just came straight out of an adventure movie. The arch was built hundreds of years ago to commemorate an apparition of the Virgin who came to be known as Our Lady of Caysasay. Her little statue is beloved by the Batangueños and other devotees.

Shopping blood

Then it was shopping time! It is in our blood to shop. We couldn't get enough. We entered a craft center where Batangas knives, embroidery and mat weaving were demonstrated. Our local guide, Dindo Montenegro said that the center was put up by Totoy Cuento. Hurrah to you, Mr. Cuento! How I wish more towns would learn from you. It was fascinating to see the mats being woven and the knives being fashioned while the *bordaderas* showed us how they made those time-consuming *calados*. We were all fascinated and once again Ino had a hard time moving the horde! Actually Ino had us all figured out. He refused to take us to the town market before we saw the Ilagan house. Having efficient organizer Raquel Garcia around wasn't enough! (She was also busy shopping!) Ino really needed an iron fist to control all of us! Of course we repeatedly protested that we were doing our share to help the local economy.

Ino thinks that the Ilagan house is one of the most beautiful examples of the 19th century *bahay na bato*. Running around the perimeter of its *sala* are incredible Gothic style arches. We were warmly received by a truly grand lady of Taal—Ms Nene Ilagan. She even served us the most delicious *yemas*! We devoured it while admiring her *azotea*—a prestige feature of houses from that period.

After the Ilagan residence, we finally got to go back to more hardcore shopping. We mostly wiped out Chito Noche's embroidery shop! The more adventurous ladies like the Vargas sisters, Nena and Tina, also bought *empanadas*, chocolate, coffee and little cookies.

Our last stop was the Calaca Parish Church. Fr. Cecilio M. Arce, I once cried at the exquisite beauty of your preserved ceilings. I cried again with your beautiful words that you were constructing a reconciliation center taking care not to disturb the architecture of the house of God. Thank you for leaving our few heritage monuments intact for future Filipinos to enjoy and value. Thank you for being sensitive to what is precious to our identity. I think that it is the ultimate image of humility that, despite your position of parish priest, you recognize the importance of respecting what was created by the faith and devotion of our ancestors.

(Sadly, I hear that there is now a controversy brewing in the church of Taal. Some concerned citizens are protesting the building of a new structure which they say is not in harmony with the rest of the beautiful Basilica. I really hope that this issue is properly resolved.)

We all went home that night (in the words of Ollie) "tired but happy." After the wonderful sights, conversations and stories, I could feel that the process of loving one's country through the arts was, little by little, beginning to creep under the group's skin. Well, we will know for sure on the next trip.

Next Monday I will be writing on the Legazpi exhibit at the National Museum. Go and see it now as it closes on April 18!

For questions and comments, e-mail beartist@filipinaslibrary.org.ph or address letters to Filipinas Heritage Library, Makati Ave., Ayala Triangle, Makati City.

Church patrimony in Taal being destroyed

From page E1

Cultural Heritage of the Church is now designing a syllabus that will introduce heritage education in the seminary curriculum.

The CBCP has gone a step further. It has endorsed the final draft of the "Agreement between the Republic of the Philippines and the Holy See on the Conservation of the Cultural Heritage of the Church."

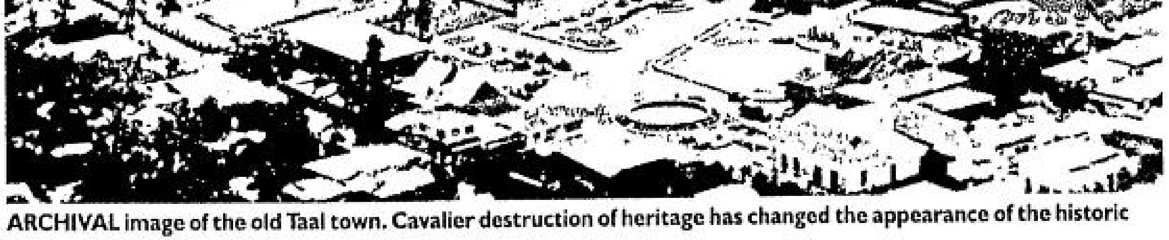
When the agreement is signed by the Philippine government, it will form part of national law. It will bind bishops and priests. It will also bind the national government to assist in the preservation of church cultural heritage.

My colleague Bambi Harper gives the reason why there should be no unauthorized alterations. "Long after Bishop Salazar is gone" as well as those opposing the construction of the adoration chapel "and all of us for that matter. . ." she said, "the basilica of coral stone will stand as a symbol of the Filipino's faith and of their heritage. It seems unfair that one man, bishop or no bishop, can decide that he can change the lay-out and configuration of a building that is centuries old."

It really is the old question of who is in charge of our national patrimony. Does its preservation fall under the whims of its temporary custodians like Bishop Salazar? Or do we, the Filipino people, take charge of the patrimony that we have inherited from our forbears?

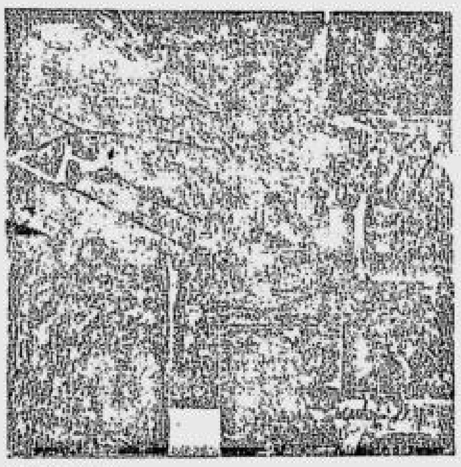
The blot growing in the Taal Church courtyard should stop.

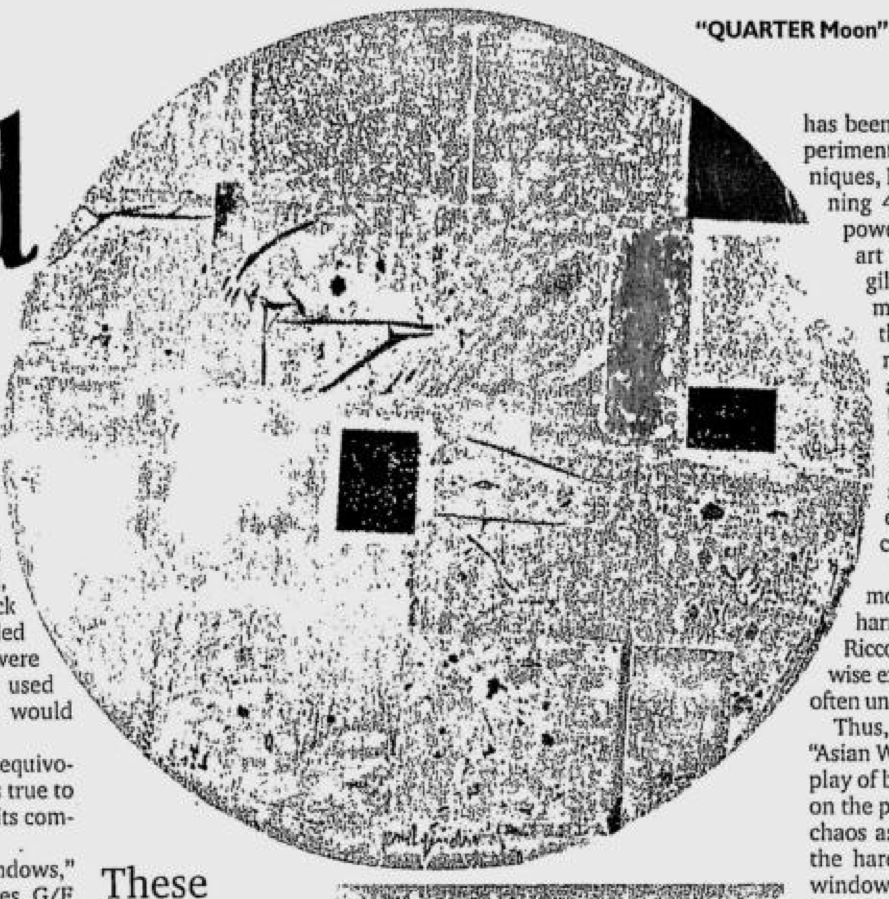
E-mail feedback to afvillalon@hotmail.com

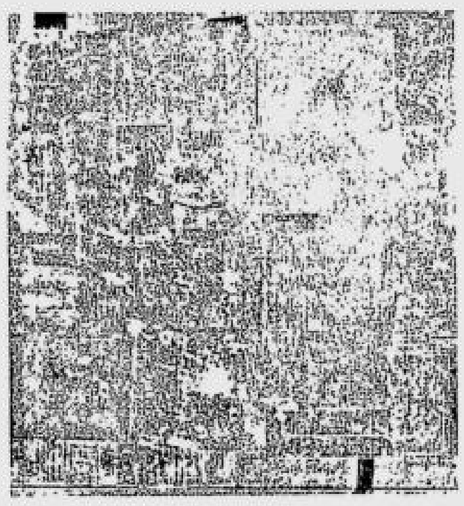


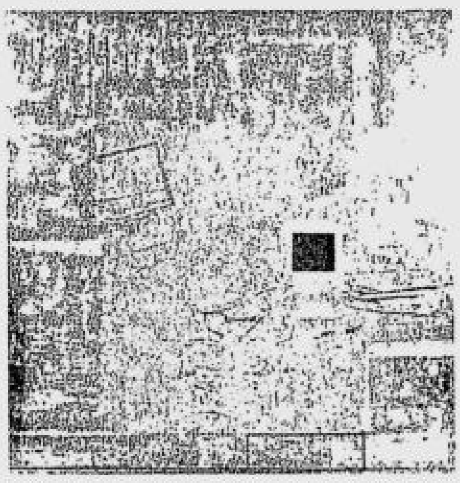
ARCHIVAL image of the old Taal town. Cavalier destruction of heritage has changed the appearance of the historic town and church.

Raul Isidro in dazzling gold


"SUNSET"


"QUARTER Moon"


"UPPER Window"


"MAIL by the Window"

By Gino Dormiendo
Contributor

THE NEW works of leading abstractionist Raul Isidro radiate an imperial glow that is overpowering and exhilarating.

Like a magnetic field that pulls everything to itself, the central image is swathed in and suffused with gold, Isidro's color of choice that harks back to his early period when various gilded elements, as in his "Festival" series, were but a speck in the vast horizon, and used primarily to offset what otherwise would have been spare surroundings.

The lure of gold has finally and unequivocally consumed the artist, and, always true to form, he has irretrievably given in to its compelling magic.

The series of works is called "Windows," (until April 16 at Ricco-Renzo Galleries, G/F, IDC Manila, 210 N. Garcia St., Bel-Air II, Makati; 8982542-43 and 45), in reference to those relatively smallish square-shaped holes that open up to a dense and dark forest, transporting the viewer to a topography of larger patches and visual fields.

These are, to be sure, windows of the cerebral kind; they lead the mind to explore multilayered pigments and infinitesimal clots of color.

Executed in luminous reds and blacks mostly, with a dab of occasional orange (to break the monotony of hues), these windows create a dynamic interaction of figure and space with elliptical lines and dots charging the surrounding space with energy.

> These windows create a dynamic interaction of figure and space charged with energy

Oriental art

A second-generation abstractionist who has been associated with innovation and experimentation in various media and techniques, Isidro, over a prodigious career spanning 40 years, continues to draw on the power of calligraphy, an age-old Oriental art form that he liberally applies in his gilded images. These endearing Asian motifs, though less pervasive here than those in his earlier "Mother Earth" monoprint series, are a recurring image in the new works, particularly in the circular-shaped canvases like "Asian Moon," where the interplay of rabid brushwork contrasts with a subtly carved horizon, the outburst of emotion neutralized by a more circumspect and composed center.

In many of the pieces (and there are more than two dozen works blending so harmoniously with the modernist Café Ricco-Renzo surroundings), the artist likewise examines the nuances of the Asian soul, often undecipherable to the Western mind.

Thus, in works like "Asian Dream" and "Asian Wind," Isidro tries to capture the interplay of both natural and spiritual phenomena on the people's psyche, an admixture of quiet chaos as suggested by the surface gloss and the hardy interiors that the allusion of the windows, with their doublespeak of looking in and out, refers to.

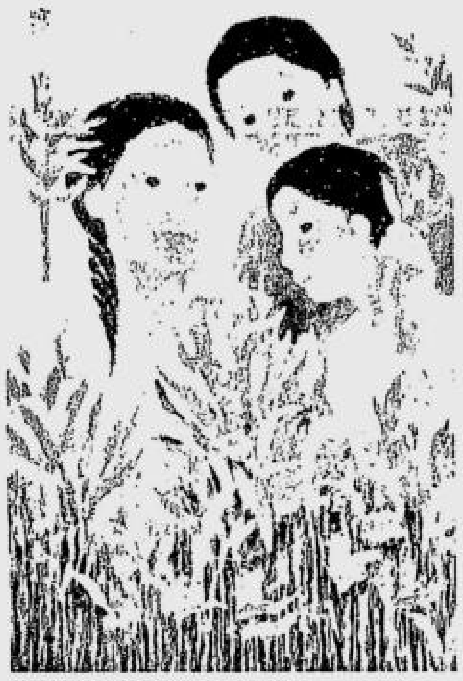
In all these works, Isidro has proved his mastery in the art of the gold leaf, which would have failed in the hands of a less astute technician. His decision to explore an obsessive hue like gold cannot be misconstrued as a mere pandering to theatrical excess; rather it is remaining true to the Filipino's celebratory character.

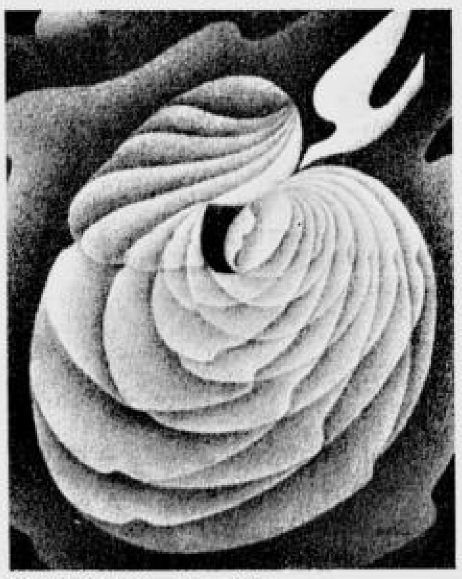
His show captures the effervescence and the perpetual engagement with golden light in a sun-dappled topography by a people consumed by celebrations of all kinds.

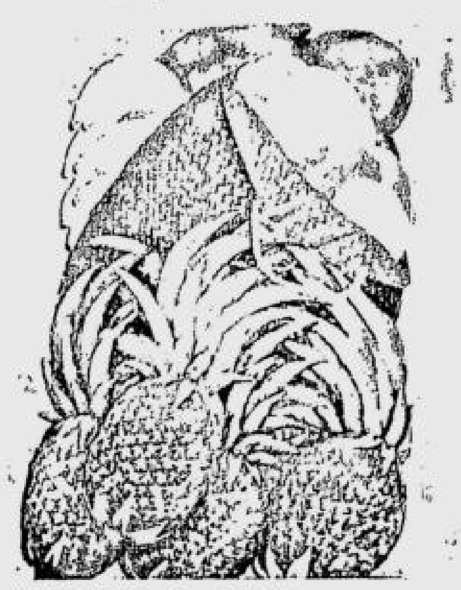
Isidro's "Windows" has a deep, hallucinatory spell, not unlike a people forever doing a balancing act on a metaphorical tightrope.

E-mail the author at gdormiendo@yahoo.com

Malang at West; Magsaysay-Ho at Crucible; Robles at Pacific Star


"HELICONIAS," by Anita Magsaysay-Ho


"BALLPEN," by Elmer Oliva


"STILL Life," by Angelo Baldemor

From page E4

and figures of opulence.

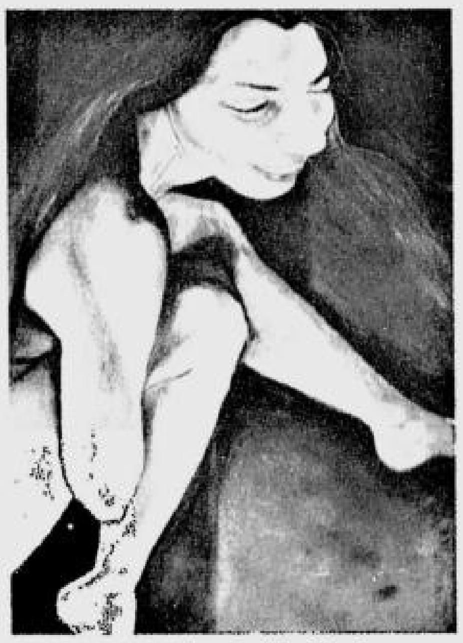
"IMBENTARYO," an exhibition of drawings, paintings and installations by six young contemporary artists, is ongoing at Tambayang Makiling (71-E Roces Ave., QC) until April 19. The show features the works of Leslie de Chavez, Marc Cosico, Ikoy Ricio, Raoul Rodriguez, Don Salubayba and Ian Victoriano. Utilizing realist, surrealist, pop and abstract imagery, as well as conceptual processes, the works are unified by social concerns. Call 4108489/ 0916-4523476.

"RECUERDOS de Mindanao" is an exhibit of photographs reproduced with permission from the Graiño Collection of the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid, Spain. Organized by Dr. Jaime B. Veneracion of the Department of History, University of the Philippines-Diliman, the exhibition consists of portraits of 19th-century inhabitants of Mindanao and the adjoining island of Balabac, the sites of Jesuit missions. The exhibit will run from April 12-May 21 at the UP Vargas Museum, Roxas Avenue, University of the Philippines, Diliman, QC.

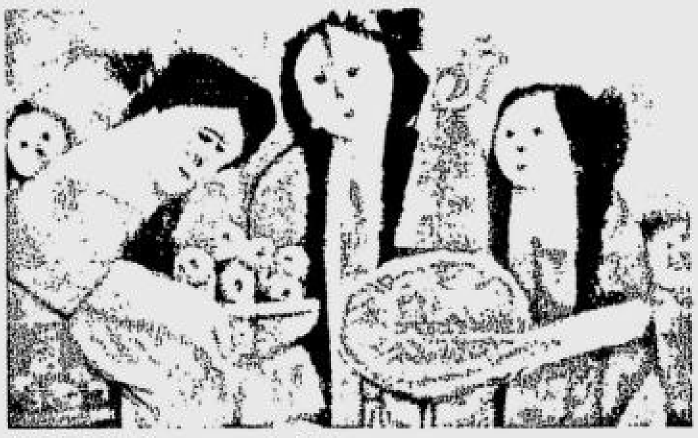
ALLIANCE Française de Manille presents the paintings and sculptures of Dionesio Gonzales in "Stay for a While." The artist uses papier mâché, wood, screen wire, stones, glass and hats in his works. The exhibit runs until April 30 at Alliance Total Gallery.

MUSEO De La Salle showcases the D.M. Guevarra Collection at Galerie Guevara and San Buenaventura-Guevara room; "Baro't Saya: Evolution of the Filipina Dress" also at the ground floor, Zaguan area. At the second floor, viewers can find family heirloom collections like furniture and decorative objects. Museo de La Salle is at the De La Salle University in Dasmariñas, Cavite.

MUSEO De La Salle offers the following workshops: Papier Mâché for Adults, April 3; Visual Arts Workshop for Kids, April 19-21; Storytelling for Kids, April 24; Kite-Making, Kite-Flying, May 15; Volunteer Training Program for Adults, which starts on June 25. Call 8447832/ 9116/ (046) 4164397.


"NARCISSA Celebrating," by Yasmin Almonte

THE POSITIVISM Art Gallery will hold evening art classes starting April 12, 5:30-7:30 p.m., at the Food and Art Galerie (12F GT Tower International, Ayala Ave and H.V. de la Costa St., Makati). The weekly seven sessions will cover caricature and portraiture, fashion design, still life, landscape and abstracts. Mediums are pencil, charcoal, oil pastel, watercolor and mixed media. Painter E.R. Tagle handles the sessions. Call 8996358 or 09275522288.


"WOMEN," oil on canvas, by Malang

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SUNRISE COFI-CRUISE
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Packed Lunch

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Roundtrip Cruise Transfers from Caylabne to El Fraile & Carabao Island & back to Caylabne
Coffee on board

SUNSET CRUISE
SCHEDULE : 4:45 PM to 6:45 PM
Php 3,800.00++ per person
(minimum of 2 persons)

Overnight Suite Accommodation
Set Breakfast
Set Lunch
Snacks on board
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Complimentary glass of wine

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Overnight Suite Accomodation
Set Lunch
Packed Dinner w/ One (1) Round of Beverage
Roundtrip Island Tour & Fishing Thrill from Caylabne to El Fraile Island & back to Caylabne
Use of fishing rods and baits

Php 1,325.00++ per person (CRUISE ONLY)
Roundtrip Island Tour & Fishing Thrill from Caylabne to El Fraile Island & back to Caylabne
Packed Dinner w/ One (1) Round of Beverage
Use of fishing rods and baits

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Php 4,400.00++ per person
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Set Lunch
Set Dinner
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(Caylabne - Island - Caylabne)

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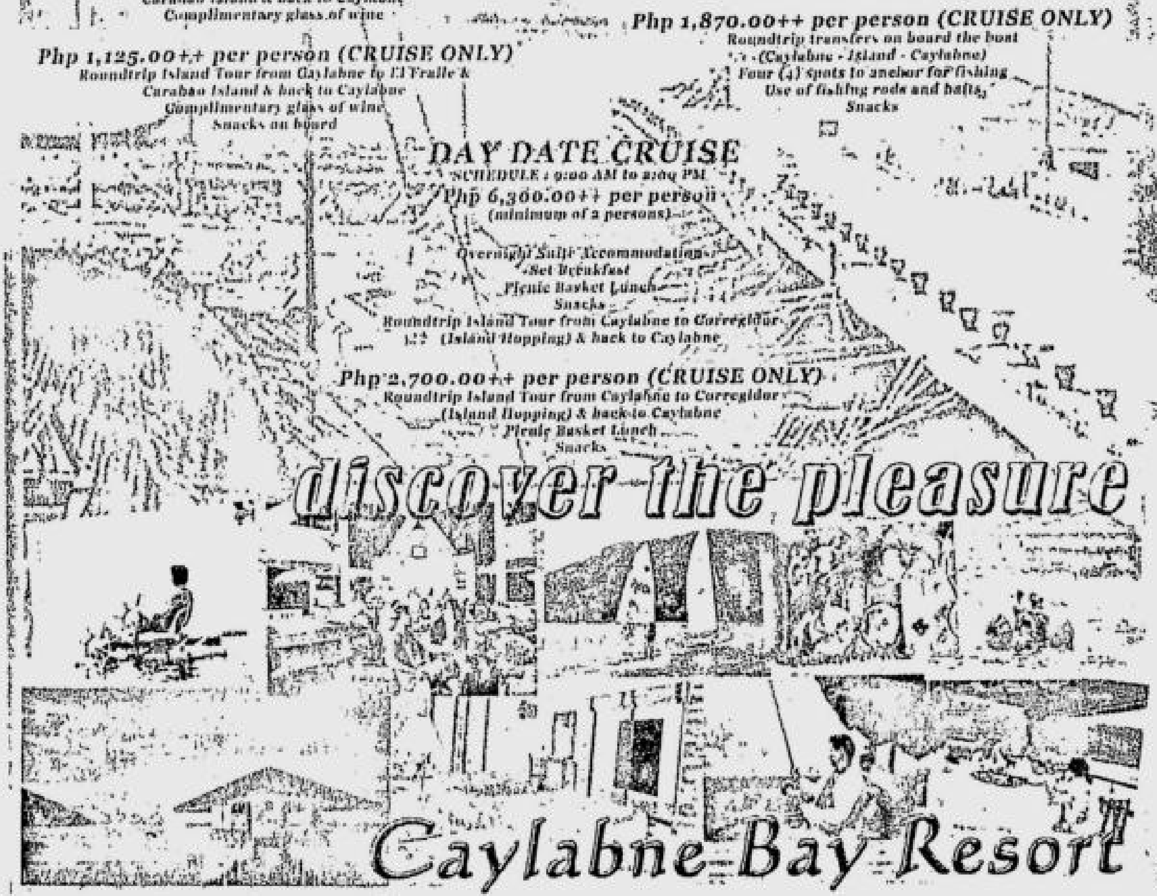
(Caylabne - Island - Caylabne)
Four (4) spots to anchor for fishing
Use of fishing rods and baits
Snacks

DAY DATE CRUISE
SCHEDULE : 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM
Php 6,300.00++ per person
(minimum of 2 persons)

Overnight Suite Accommodation
Set Breakfast
Picnic Basket Lunch
Snacks
Roundtrip Island Tour from Caylabne to Corregidor (Island Hopping) & back to Caylabne

Php 2,700.00++ per person (CRUISE ONLY)
Roundtrip Island Tour from Caylabne to Corregidor (Island Hopping) & back to Caylabne
Picnic Basket Lunch
Snacks

discover the pleasure



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Malang at West; Magsaysay-Ho at Crucible; Robles at Pacific Star

IN CELEBRATION of March as Women's Month, Liongoren Gallery (111 New York St, Cuban, Quezon City) is holding the annual "Walong Filipino" exhibit. Participating artists are Philippine Women's University art professor and University of Santo Tomas fine arts alumna Ambie Abano; UP media and the arts professor and Manunuri ng Pelikulang Pilipino chair Gigi Javier-Alfonso; UP studio arts department chair Yasmin Almonte; installation artist and teacher Edda Amonoy; Galerie Kamarikutan founder and Palawan arts promoter Dinggot Conde-Prieto; art writer Lisa Ito; sculptress-entrepreneur Portia Mercado; and National Commission for Culture and the Arts Visayas visual arts coordinator Kitty Taniguchi. Call 9124319 or 9124640.

MALANG's newest show, "Recent Oils," will open on April 1 at West Gallery-Glorietta 4. Ana Labrador, in the book "Malang: Vendor & Cities" (2002), explains the artist's constant appeal: "It has something to do with his emphasis on the things that are enduring. He seems to say that despite the instability of their fortunes, many people go on as best as they can. Malang's conscious choices of vivid color do not mirror reality; rather it is how he imagines life should be... His art allows another version of reality that presents something better than what many have immediately around them." Call 7527028.

VISUAL ARTS

ANITA Magsaysay-Ho opens an exhibit of recent works tomorrow at the Crucible Gallery in SM Megamall. The show consists of three 23.25" x 16.5" pieces in oil on board, all done this year; a watercolor on paper from 2001; colored pencil on paper from 1992; and three pencil drawings on paper from the mid-'90s. Magsaysay-Ho was a member of the "13 Artists," the original group of modernists who blazed a trail in Philippine art.

UNITED States-based artist Rene Robles is holding his latest exhibit, "Transcendence," at Pacific Star Bldg. on Gil Puyat and Makati Avenues, Makati City, until April 2. Robles, who trained at the University of Santo Tomas College of Architecture and Fine Arts, has received awards from the Manhattan Arts Magazine international art competition and the Somerset Country Heritage and Cultural Commission. The exhibit will benefit Gawad Kalinga, a charity program of the Couples and Singles for Christ. Call 7525450 local 309.

FULL Moon Art Café Gallery will feature 14 artists in its inaugural exhibit on April 13. Owned by doctor, painter and sculptor Nathaniel Rimando, the gallery is located at California Avenue, Canaoay, San Fernando, La Union. "Statements" will feature the works of Raul Isidro, Ros Arcilla, Eliezer Dimaculangan, Aurea Farolan, Danny Gardia, Jose Hombrebuena, Alfonso Oliva, Elmer Oliva, Raul Piedra, Rodel Rillera, Ronald Ruiz, Roland Yumang, E. R. Tagle, and Rimando.

LIZANNE Uchaco's 18th exhibit is ongoing at the Art Space-Glorietta 4 until April 2. The works focus on feng-shui cures: Zen gardens combed in the artist's distinguishing mark of the lucky Oriental coin with a square hole in the middle believed to bring good luck and harmony; sail boats to ensure smooth sailing in business and career; horses that represent power and virtue; and dragons exhaling jade, pearls, and coins; masks to ward off evil;

MALANG E3

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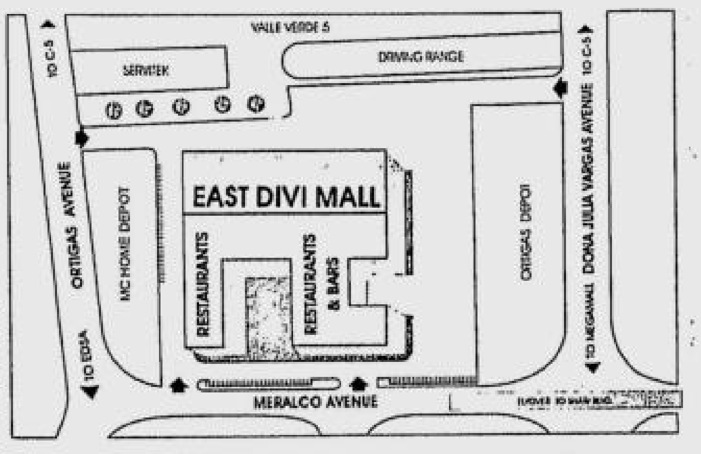
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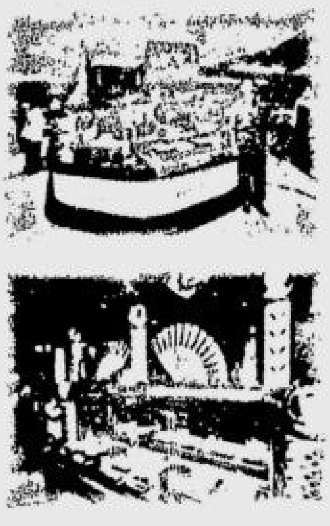

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The passion of the Christ, according to the 'sinakulo'

By Irene C. Perez

MANY superlatives have been said about the breakthrough religious epic "The Passion of the Christ," but in this predominantly Catholic country, we see sundry versions of Christ's suffering every Lent through the *sinakulo*.

The traditional *sinakulo* traces its roots to the pasyon, the sung reading of the Lord's Passion during Lent (there are many texts, the more prominent of which are Gaspar Aquino de Belen's, Aniceto de la Merced's and the "Pasyong Pilapil"). The Lenten drama comes in different names according to geography: *sinakulo* or *pasion y muerte* (passion and death) in Rizal, Bulacan, Pampanga, Pangasinan and Leyte; *kalbaryuhan* in other Tagalog areas; *moriones* (centurions) in Marinduque; *tanggal* (deposition) in Bicol; and *taltal* or *pagtaltal* in Guimaras in the Visayas.

In Manila, Tanghalang Sta. Ana is in the forefront of upholding the Lenten tradition through the staging of "Martir sa Golgota" featuring Richard Signey as Jesus Christ and Alma Concepcion as Mary Magdalene. The play will be performed from Holy Monday to Black Saturday.

The community theater, founded by Manila Councilor Lou Veloso in the '80s, boasts of more than a hundred volunteers composed of celebrities and local residents.

"Martir" was Tanghalang's first production. Staging it free for the public yearly is a form of thanksgiving, a *panata*, even.

"Volunteers include practically everyone—teachers, drivers, students, out-of-school youths," Veloso, who also directs the play, said.

Now, how could you put on a Lenten classic that has been told countless times without being too much of a biblical cliché?

They modify the script, accentuating issues that are especially applicable at present, like politics and elections this year.

Although Tanghalang Sta. Ana does not have a formal tieup with mainstream theater, Veloso said that institutions like Tanghalang Pilipino, Bulwagang Gantimpala, Cultural Center of the Philippines and National Commission for Culture and the Arts are very supportive of its ventures.

Jesus knock-off

Signey, who could easily be a Jesus knock-off with his long hair and sinewy physique, acted for the dramas "Grethology," "Butterflies are Free" and "HudHud."

This Catholic PnoySpik in English advocate was a member of Opus Dei, and now plays God for "Martir."

"*Pinagtyatagaan nila* (volunteers) *talaga yung ginagawa nila*, it's easier if it's the people of the community that you're helping… if you know *na hindi naman binebenta 'tong* show *na 'to*. If you remove money from the equation, for some reason, everything becomes better," said the half-Igorot and half-Ilocano actor.

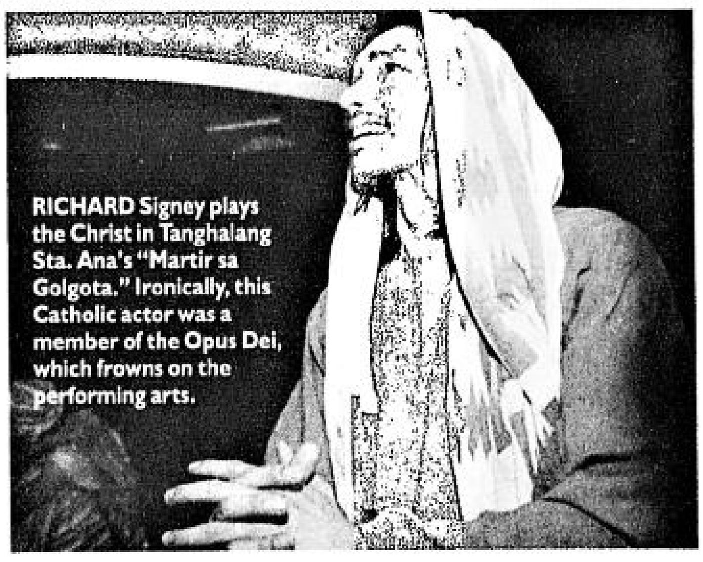
Many would have been surprised to see Alma Concepcion on stage as Mary Magdalene. Unknown to many, the 1994 Binibining Pilipinas International crown-holder acted for theater productions such as "Ibong Adarna," "Silang Nalugmok sa Dilim," "Florante at Laura" and "Rashomon" even before she hit show business.

Angelle de la Vega, who gained insane popularity in the '90s as teen Agoo "visionary" Judiel Nieva, does song interpretations as Angel.

THE PASSION/ F3

RUSSEL Sorillo plays Pontius Pilate and alternates with Signey as Jesus Christ.

PHOTOS: RANDY HORMILLOSA


RICHARD Signey plays the Christ in Tanghalang Sta. Ana's "Martir sa Golgota." Ironically, this Catholic actor was a member of the Opus Dei, which frowns on the performing arts.

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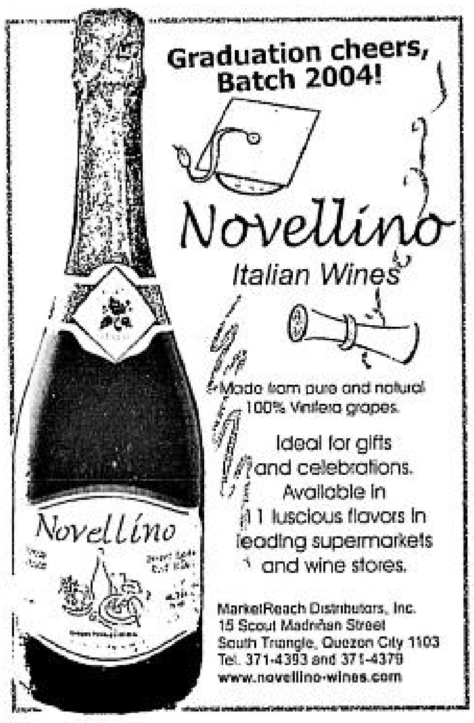
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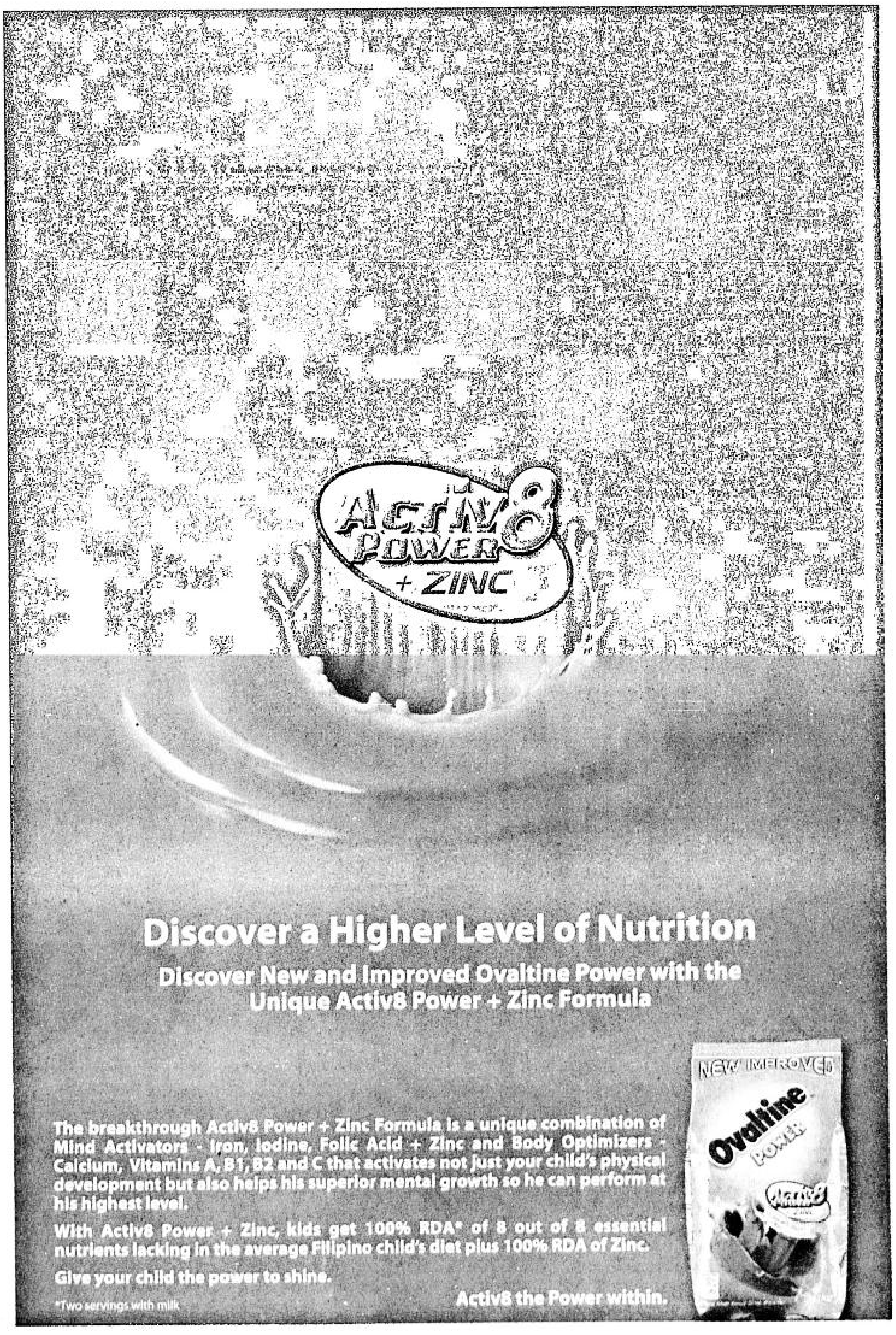
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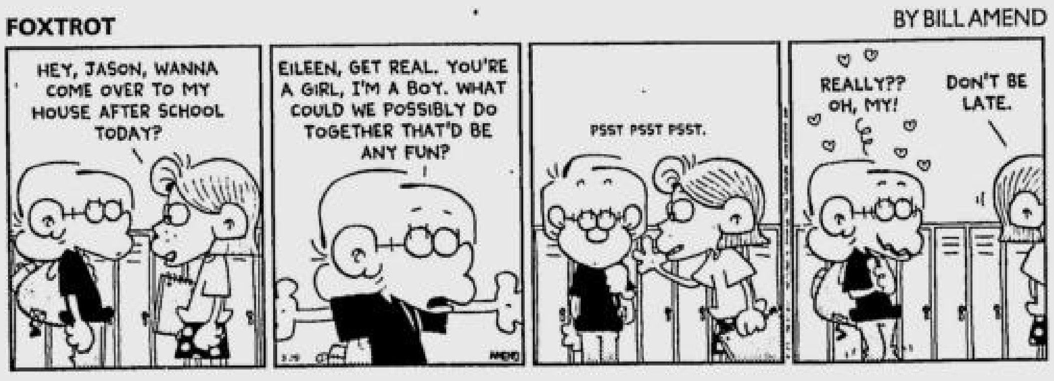
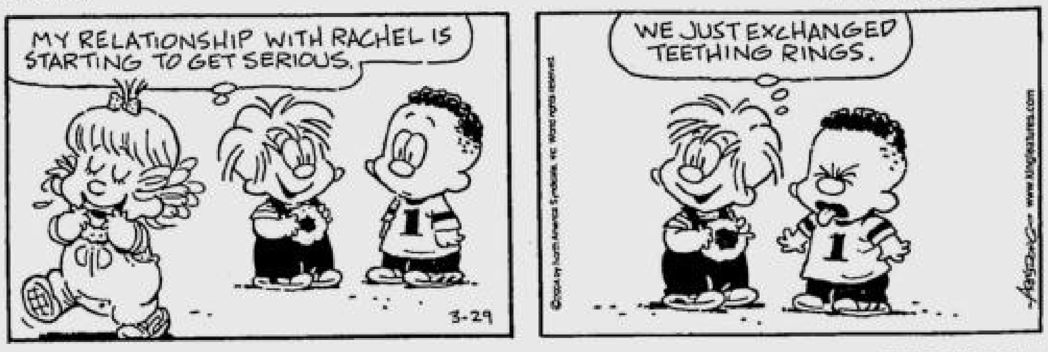
BY BILL AMEND


HEY, JASON, WANNA COME OVER TO MY HOUSE AFTER SCHOOL TODAY?
EILEEN, GET REAL. YOU'RE A GIRL, I'M A BOY. WHAT COULD WE POSSIBLY DO TOGETHER THAT'D BE ANY FUN?
PSST PSST PSST.
REALLY?? OH, MY!
DON'T BE LATE.
AMEND

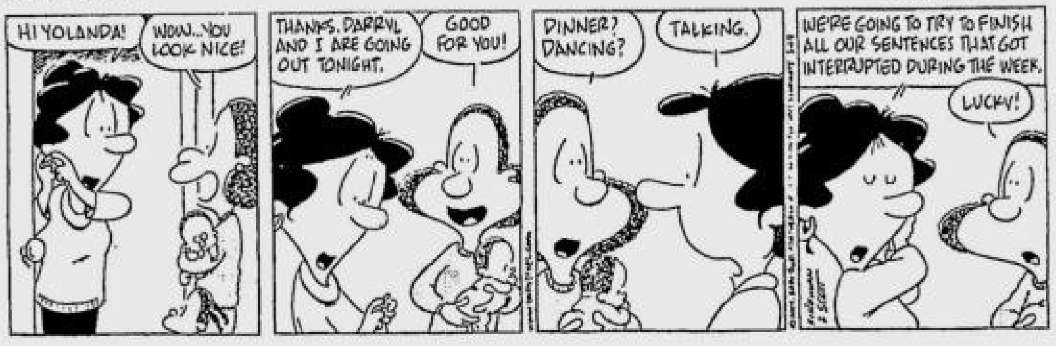
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


MY RELATIONSHIP WITH RACHEL IS STARTING TO GET SERIOUS.
WE JUST EXCHANGED TEETHING RINGS.
3-29
www.kingfeatures.com

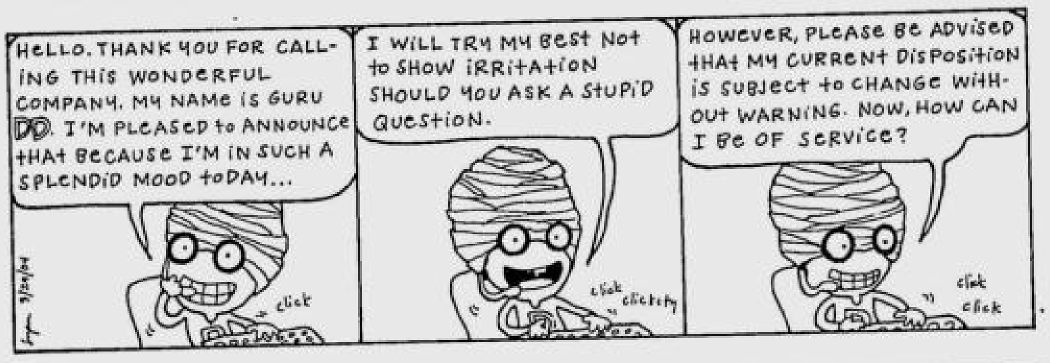
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


HI YOLANDA!
WOW...YOU LOOK NICE!
THANKS. DARRYL AND I ARE GOING OUT TONIGHT.
GOOD FOR YOU!
DINNER? DANCING?
TALKING.
WE'RE GOING TO TRY TO FINISH ALL OUR SENTENCES THAT GOT INTERRUPTED DURING THE WEEK.
LUCKY!

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO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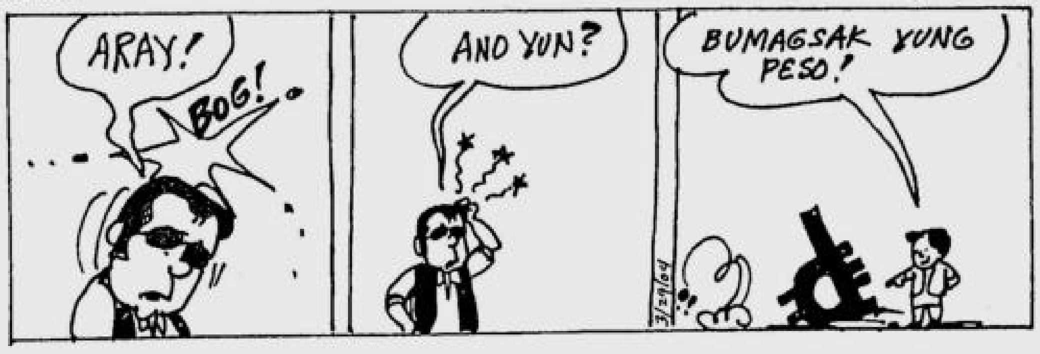
HOWEVER, PLEASE BE ADVISED THAT MY CURRENT DISPOSITION IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT WARNING. NOW, HOW CAN I BE OF SERVICE?
click
click clickety
click click

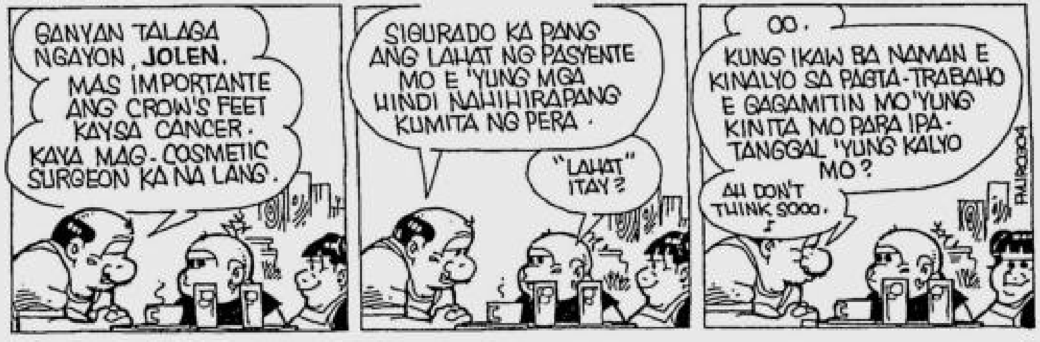
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


ARAY!
BOG!
ANO YUN?
BUMAGSAK YUNG PESO!
3/29/04

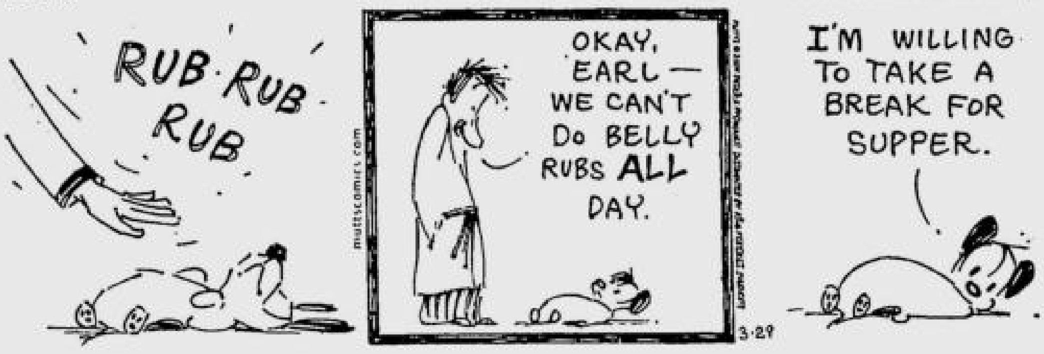
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


GANYAN TALAGA NGAYON, JOLEN. MAS IMPORTANTE ANG CROW'S FEET KAYSA CANCER. KAYA MAG-COSMETIC SURGEON KA NA LANG.
SIGURADO KA PANG ANG LAHAT NG PASYENTE MO E 'YUNG MGA HINDI NAHIHIRAPANG KUMITA NG PERA.
"LAHAT" ITAY?
OO.
KUNG IKAW BA NAMAN E KINALYO SA PAGTA-TRABAHO E GAGAMITIN MO 'YUNG KINITA MO PARA IPA-TANGGAL 'YUNG KALYO MO?
AH DON'T THINK SOOO.

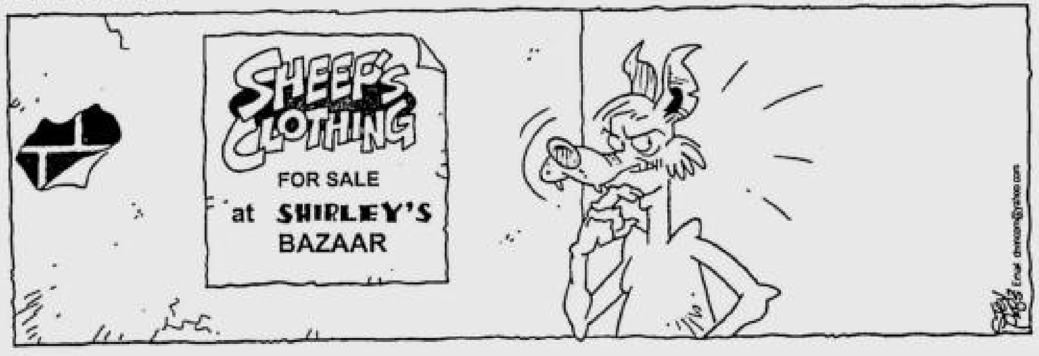
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


RUB RUB RUB
OKAY, EARL — WE CAN'T DO BELLY RUBS ALL DAY.
I'M WILLING TO TAKE A BREAK FOR SUPPER.
muttscomics.com
3-29

DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS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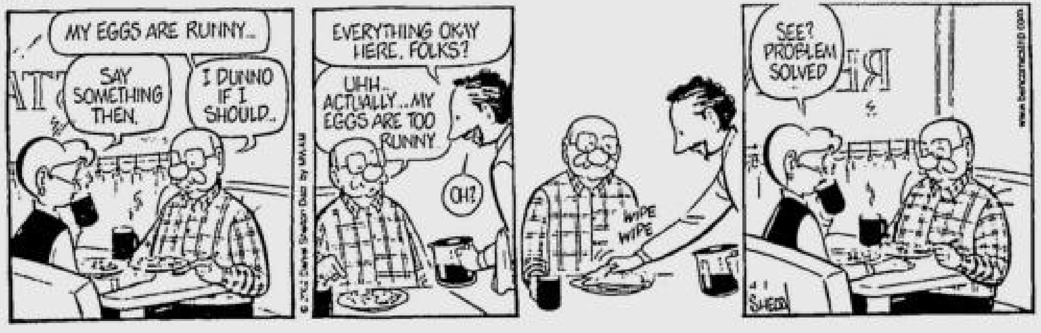
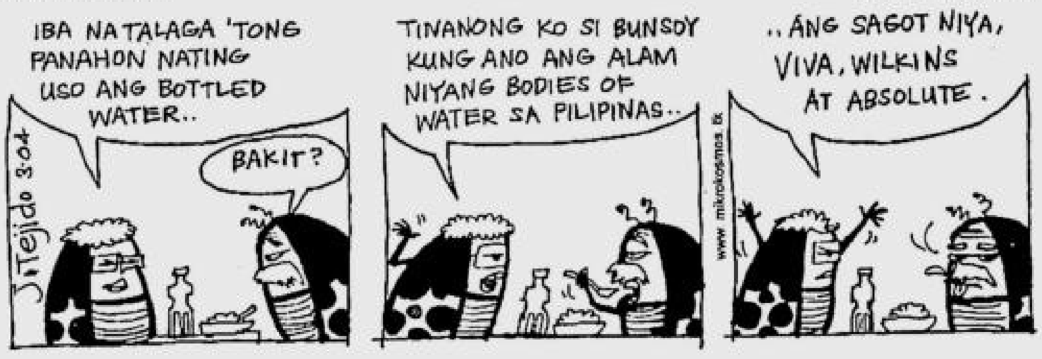
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


MY EGGS ARE RUNNY...
SAY SOMETHING THEN.
I DUNNO IF I SHOULD...
EVERYTHING OKAY HERE, FOLKS?
UHH... ACTUALLY...MY EGGS ARE TOO RUNNY.
OH?
WIPE WIPE
SEE? PROBLEM SOLVED
www.bencomicstrip.com

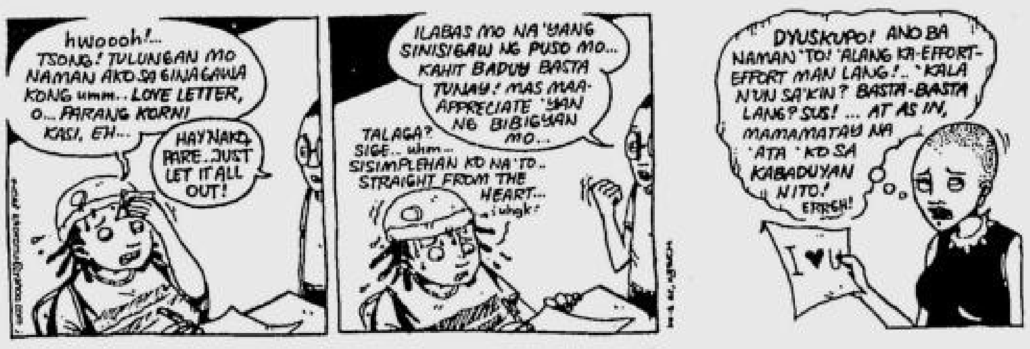
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


IBA NA TALAGA 'TONG PANAHON NATING USO ANG BOTTLED WATER..
BAKIT?
TINANONG KO SI BUNSOY KUNG ANO ANG ALAM NIYANG BODIES OF WATER SA PILIPINAS..
..ANG SAGOT NIYA, VIVA, WILKINS AT ABSOLUTE.
J. Tejido 3-04

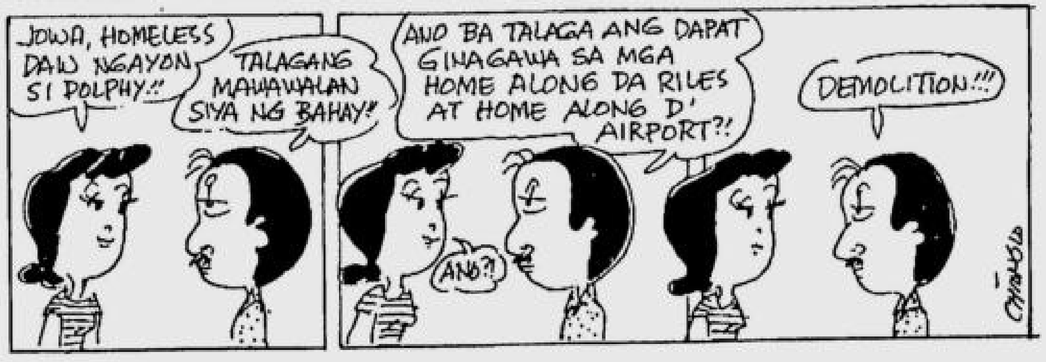
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


hwoooh!... TSONG! TULUNGAN MO NAMAN AKO SA GINAGAWA KONG umm.. LOVE LETTER, O... PARANG KORNI KASI, EH...
HAYNAKO, PARE.. JUST LET IT ALL OUT!
ILABAS MO NA 'YANG SINISIGAW NG PUSO MO... KAHIT BADUY BASTA TUNAY! MAS MAA-APPRECIATE 'YAN NG BIBIGYAN MO...
TALAGA? SIGE.. uhm... SISIMPLEHAN KO NA 'TO.. STRAIGHT FROM THE HEART...
DYUSKUPO! ANO BA NAMAN 'TO! 'ALANG KA-EFFORT-EFFORT MAN LANG!.. 'KALA N'YA SA'KIN? BASTA-BASTA LANG? SUS! ... AT AS IN, MAMAMATAY NA 'ATA 'KO SA KABADUYAN NITO!
ERRGH!
I ♥ U

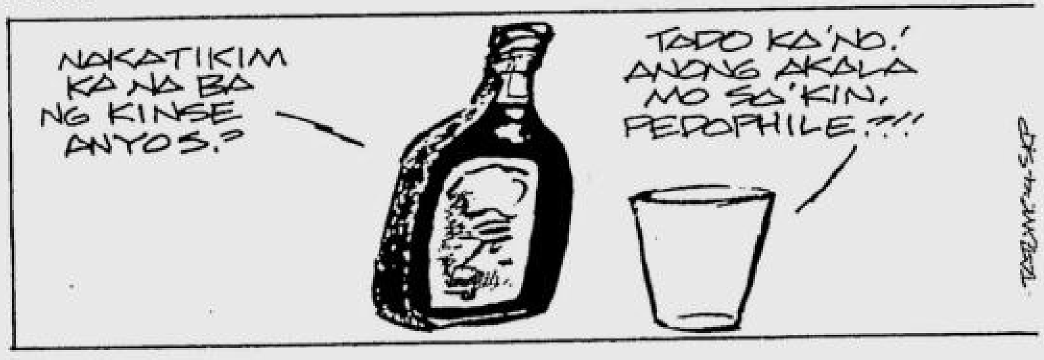
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


JOWA, HOMELESS DAW NGAYON SI DOLPHY!!
TALAGANG MAWAWALAN SIYA NG BAHAY!
ANO BA TALAGA ANG DAPAT GINAGAWA SA MGA HOME ALONG DA RILES AT HOME ALONG D' AIRPORT?!
ANO?!
DEMOLITION!!!
CHIONGLO

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


NAKATIKIM KA NA BA NG KINSE ANYOS?
TODO KA 'NO! ANONG AKALA MO SA'KIN, PEDOPHILE?!!

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You are intelligent and idealistic. You have a shrewd, biting humor. You like to debunk those who are self-righteous. You are trustworthy and loyal but never intimidated. You appreciate life's ironies and can laugh at yourself. The year ahead focuses on your closest relationships and partnerships.
Birthdate of: Cy Young, baseball pitcher; Pearl Bailey, singer; Eric Idle, comedian/actor.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): You need some time today to retire by yourself to your own private place. Try to give yourself a pleasant, relaxing moment at home. (Or slip away somewhere else.)

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Even the most casual conversation seems to have a deeper emotional depth today. Things you normally take for granted are suddenly very important.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): You won't want to lend your possessions to anyone today. For some reason, you feel very attached to things right now. That's OK. (It's allowed.)

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): This is a good day for one-on-one discussions with others. You feel a strong need to relate to people now. You certainly feel supportive and sympathetic toward someone.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): You might be attracted to some kind of mystical or spiritual discipline today. You want to explore deep subjects that intrigue you. You need understanding at a gut level.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): You suddenly feel protective and supportive of a friend today. However, you could become jealous if this friend pays more attention to someone else. (Does this really matter?)

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Conversations with VIPs and bosses are important today. You want to show others what you're worth. You need to be appreciated for your efforts! (This is certainly reasonable.)

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): You feel a strong urge to break away from your daily routine today. You want to go off somewhere and do something entirely different. If you can swing this, do it.

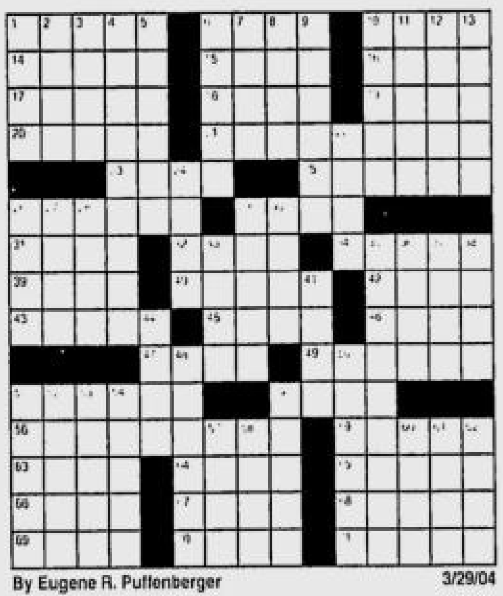
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Your emotions are very intense today. You don't have to know why; they just are. That's why you need to pamper yourself in tiny ways. (An extra coffee? A long lunch? Be good to yourself.)

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Be careful that you don't react to others in a knee-jerk fashion. If you have disagreements with partners and loved ones, think before you speak.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): This is a good day to focus on home crafts, personal hygiene, home care or just stocking up on stuff from the drugstore. Take care of those little details you keep putting off. Buy toothpaste.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): You can't hide your feelings from others today. That's because you need to be yourself and feel who you really are. That's OK. It's "cards on the table" time.

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Eugene R. Puffenberger
Houston, TX

3/29/04

ACROSS
1 Make suitable
6 Hard to find
10 Killer whale
14 Port of Iraq
15 Neighbor of Iraq
16 Old geezer
17 In progress
18 Effervesce
19 Guitar clamp
20 Pompous gait
21 Turning centerpiece
23 Venetian magistrate
25 __ Beach, SC
26 Hubbub
29 Govt. agents
31 Radames' sweetheart
32 Snake: pref.
34 Old anesthetic
39 Burl on a tree
40 Ketchup company
42 Small amount
43 __ chloride (refrigerant)
45 Pay to play
46 Bow notch
47 Former acorns
49 Actress Danner
51 Sacred Egyptian beetle
55 City south of Moscow
56 Ordinary gal
59 Dominant male
63 Attain
64 Eastern leader
65 Bannister or Coe, e.g.
66 God of love
67 Fires
68 Luxury Honda
69 Copenhagen resident
70 Biblical pronoun
71 Spade's "Just Shoot Me" co-star

DOWN
1 Arabian cloaks
2 Loony
3 Hebrew lyre
4 Riverboat of song
5 Body art
6 Long gun
7 Opera highlight
8 Heckle
9 Biochemical catalyst
10 Take place
11 Oven-cook
12 Fossil resin
13 Make amends
22 "Auld Lang __"
24 "Rhoda" co-star, David
26 Birthday dessert
27 Dryer trappings
28 19th-century actress Menken
29 Dilutes
30 Primo condition
33 Reach an optimum
35 Edward Albee play
36 Owl sound
37 Incise deeply
38 Gather leaves
41 Domesticated ox
44 Type of shark?
48 Wretched
50 Andes critters
51 Burn up the road
52 Bow or Barton
53 Burr or Copland
54 Washer cycle
55 Succinct
57 Indian nursemaid
58 Baseball team
60 Hydrant
61 Queen of the gods
62 Asian inland sea

Saturday's Puzzle Solved

A	C	A	D	E	M	I	C	■	D	I	S	M	A	L
P	A	L	O	M	I	N	O	■	E	S	C	A	P	E
B	R	A	N	D	N	E	W	■	S	L	U	R	P	S
S	P	I	N	E	D	■	B	A	K	E	R	I	E	S
■	■	■	I	N	R	O	A	D	■	T	R	O	T	■
S	P	E	E	■	E	U	R	O	S	■	I	N	I	T
L	O	X	■	M	A	I	N	S	Q	U	E	E	Z	E
O	R	C	H	I	D	■	■	■	U	L	S	T	E	R
S	T	E	A	M	E	R	C	L	A	M	■	T	R	I
H	O	L	M	■	R	A	R	E	R	■	T	E	S	S
■	F	L	A	I	■	T	U	X	E	D	O	■	■	■
I	C	E	C	R	E	A	M	■	D	R	O	O	L	E
M	A	N	T	E	L	■	B	L	E	A	K	E	S	T
A	L	C	O	V	E	■	E	X	A	M	I	N	E	E
C	L	E	R	I	C	■	D	I	L	A	T	E	R	S

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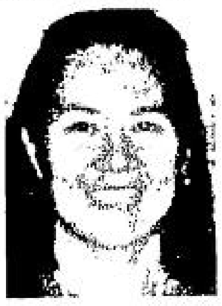
3/29/04

Finalists in 'Sing Young' songwriting contest named

VICENTE Paolo Tirol

REUBEN Laurente



CHRISTINE Bendebel

THE INTERNATIONAL Association of Business Communicators (IABC) Philippines has announced the 10 finalists in its songwriting competition, "Sing Young": "Ang Payo," with Noel Cabangon as lyricist and composer; "Is Heaven Open to Everyone," with Allan Richard Feliciano as composer and Michael Villegas as lyricist; "My Vow," with Reuben Laurente as composer and Markel Luna as lyricist; "Jam," with Jay Marquez as composer and lyricist; "Korek Ka Dyan," with Gideon Marcelo as composer and lyricist; "Make the Connection," with Arnel de Pano as composer and lyricist; "Pagmamahal na Walang Wakas," with Christine Bendebel as composer and lyricist; "Itay, Salamat Sa 'Yo," with John Madrigal as composer and lyricist, "Race Against Imagination," with Vicente Paulo Tirol as composer and lyricist; and "Upon Your Hands," with Eric Obach as composer and lyricist.

The competition is part of IABC's yearly Gold Quill Awards and Asia-Pacific Communication Conference.

The top entries will compete on tonight at 7 at the Carlos P. Romulo Auditorium, Podium 4, Tower 2, RCBC Plaza, Ayala Avenue corner Sen. Gil. Puyat Avenue. Gary Valenciano is emcee.

The show will be broadcast on ABC 5 on April 4, 2-4 p.m. The IABC is a global network of international communicators based in San Francisco, with over 13,000 members in America, Europe, Asia and Africa.

Tickets are available at P500 and P300. Call 8929592 or 8455380.

Summer dance workshops offered

SPEND your summer learning the best of classical and modern ballet and other dance forms at the Vibeca Danskul (AMO Bldg., 92 New York St., Quezon City).

Vibeca is holding summer classes starting April 12.

Classical ballet will be offered thrice a week, in 18 sessions for beginners (4-6 years old), children (7-11), elementary (9-14), and intermediate (13 and above).

Modern ballet will be offered twice a week for 12 sessions. Creative movement will be offered to 4- to 6-year-olds; the elementary course for 7-12-year-olds; and the intermediate for those 13 years and above.

Improvisation and composition classes will be offered twice a week for 12 sessions. It is for students with a dancing background, aged 16 years and above.

Jazz will be taught twice a week for 12 sessions for kids (5-11 years old); intermediate (12 years and above); and teens and adults.

"Street grooves" combines jazz and street dancing. It will be offered twice a week for 12 sessions for kids (5-11 years old) and teens and adults.

KIDS discover ballet as a fun learning experience at Vibeca

Polynesian dance will be offered twice a week for 12 sessions for kids and adults.

Other courses are body conditioning (low-impact, mostly floor exercises derived from Pilates) and classical and modern ballet exercises.

Enrollment is ongoing until April 6 (for old students) and April 17 (for new students).

Call 9124283, 9126781 or 9957441.

The passion. . .

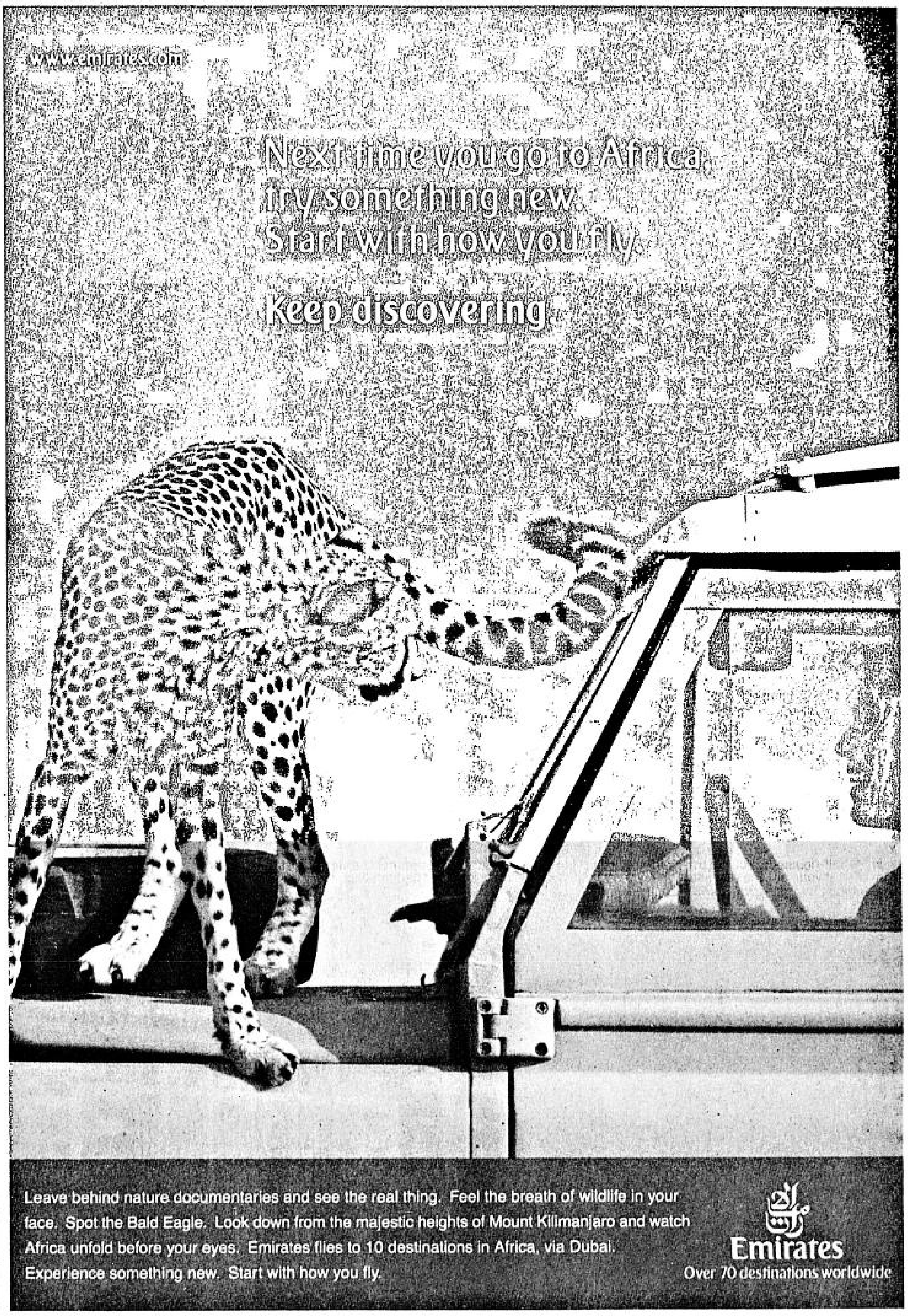
From page F1

Presentations over the past years featured actors Ariel Rivera, Christopher de Leon, Rez Cortez, Daniel Fernando, Rita Avila, Pinky Marquez and Carmi Martin and Raymond Keannu.

People in Manila might not be shouting too sadistic, too violent or anti-Semitic on this community project. After all they've been seeing it for 15 years now. "Martir sa Golgota" is primarily a documentation of the passion, a celebration of the greatest suffering of all.

"Martir sa Golgota" will be staged on April 5 at the St. Jude Parish courtyard, San Miguel; April 6, Munting Isla V. Mapa Extension, Sta. Mesa; April 7, Plaza Hugo, Sta. Ana; April 8, Mabolo basketball court, Obesis St, Pandacan; April 9, J. Posadas, Punta Sta. Ana. Performances start at 7:30 p.m. Call 5644365 or 7210801.

MANILA Councilor Lou Veloso directs "Martir."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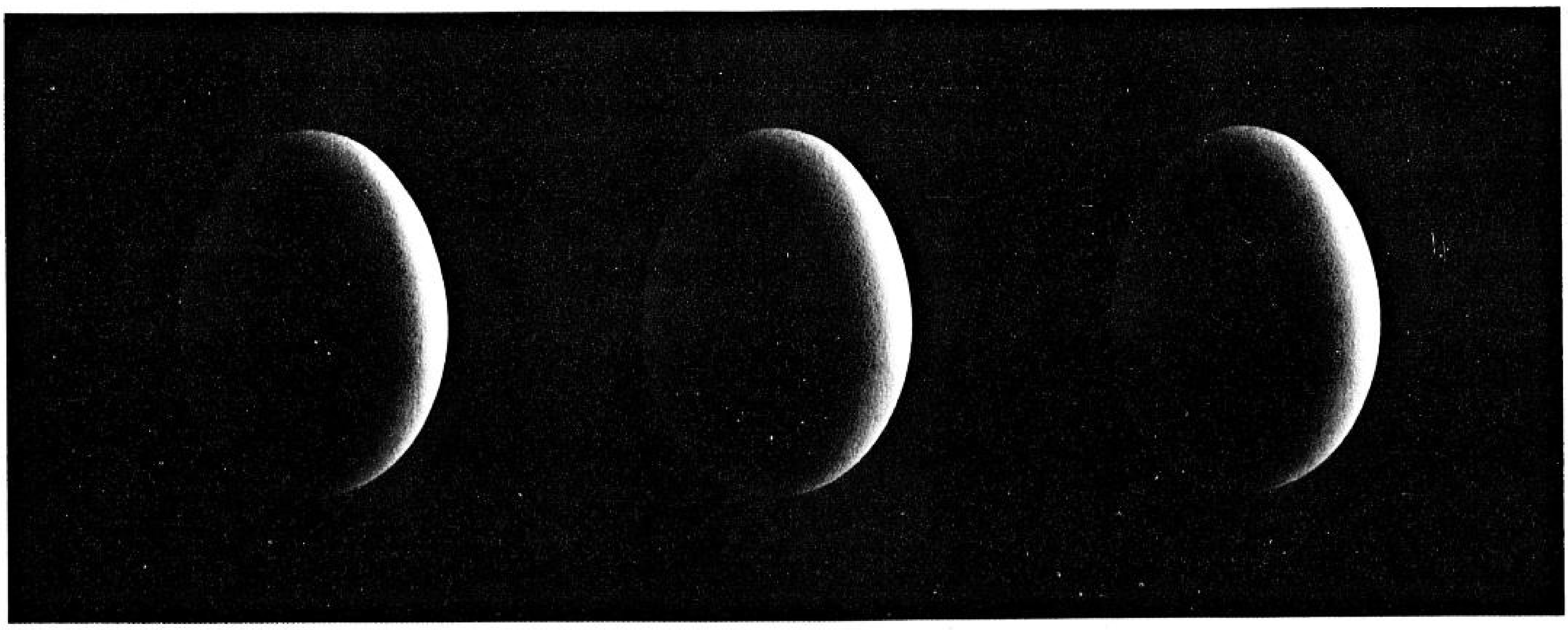
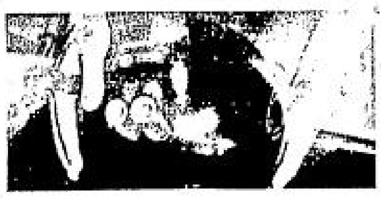


Enjoy three nights for the price of two this Easter. Spend a relaxing Easter at Edsa Shangri-La. Book two nights in a Deluxe Room for only Php 4,650++ per night or a Superior Room for only Php 4,500++ per night and enjoy the third night FREE. Dine at any of our restaurants and enjoy a 10% discount from April 4 -10. Plus get a 15% discount on our Easter Sunday Fair tickets. Now, you won't have to hunt for the perfect Easter treat. For reservations and inquiries, call 636-9082 to 87 or e-mail rsvn_esl@shangri-la.com.

Room package is valid from April 1 - 30, 2004 only. Complimentary buffet breakfast for two is for the first two days only. Overnight rate and other packages also available. Subject to availability, prior reservations required. Open to local residents and expatriates only, proof of identification may be required. Rates are subject to VAT, service charge and government tax.

Edsa Shangri-La
MANILA

Rising Across Rockwell.
For announcement purposes only.



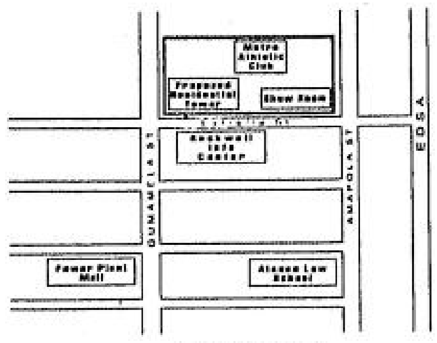
metropolitan

For as low as
₱10,777 a month!

The only affordable premium residential condo that comes with a sports resort membership.

When you want to have your place in the heart of the city, but not in its traffic. When you want to have the full range of sports and athletic amenities available, not just the usual token few. When you want to have the convenience of living near the mall, but not in it. And when you want to have it all at a reasonable and affordable price, and not have to pay for the moon.

Then it's time to check out the Metropolitan. A new premier residential condominium soon to rise on Estrella St. right across Rockwell, featuring its own sports resort and athletic club.


Metro Athletic Club
Proposed Residential Tower
Show Room
Estrella St.
Rockwell Info Center
GUMAMELA ST
AMAPOLA ST
EDSA
Power Plant Mall
Ateneo Law School

VICINITY MAP

MAC
Metropolitan Athletic Club

For inquiries, please call:
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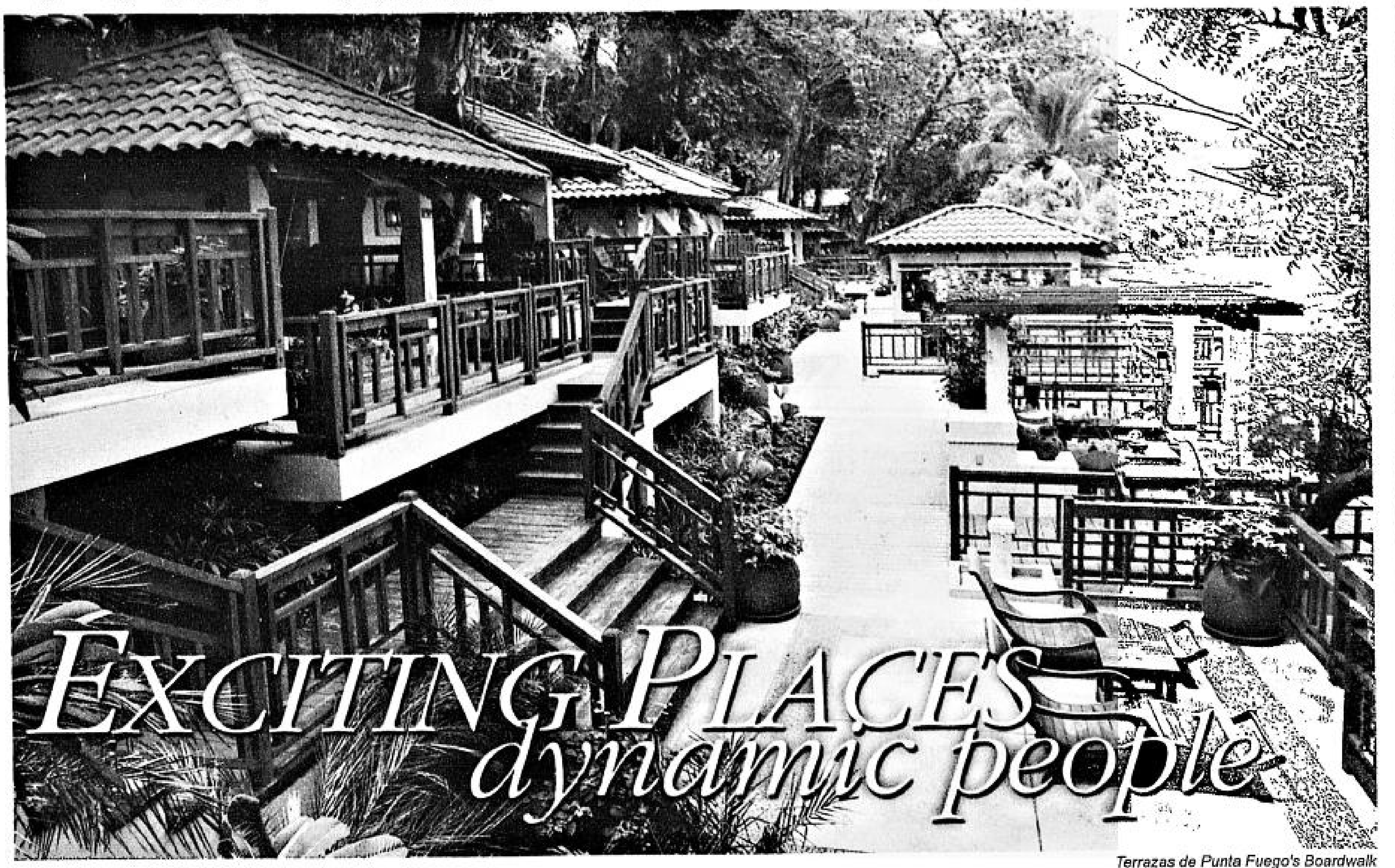
0917-8272560

Another landmark project of
PHILTOWN
A Subsidiary of RFM Corporation

In an age where living spaces have become virtual shoeboxes, a real estate development by Landco welcomes like a well-bred host, elegant and capable of contributing to a splendid lifestyle.

EXCITING PLACES
dynamic people


Terrazas de Punta Fuego's Boardwalk

LANDCO PACIFIC
CORPORATION

Homes may speak volumes, but a quintessential Landco community never shouts or flaunts elaborate design schemes to create visual impact. Every project that carries the Landco stamp evokes order, dignity, and quiet grace.

After only 14 years of creating personalized spaces that combine form and function, Landco has joined the ranks of the most formidable names in the property development sector. Already, its real estate developments, which intrepidly challenges design and concept conventions, have become the building blueprints even of its fiercest rivals and critics. But more than anything, its wide spectrum of development projects all over the country simply echo the relentless creativity and vision of its top man, the passionate and articulate Alfred Xerez-Burgos, Jr.

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Such uncanny mettle came from years of working relentlessly for one of the country's much-vaunted real estate developers. However, the years of working for a company with rigid corporate parameters, Mr. Burgos accedes, proved rewarding only up to a certain point.

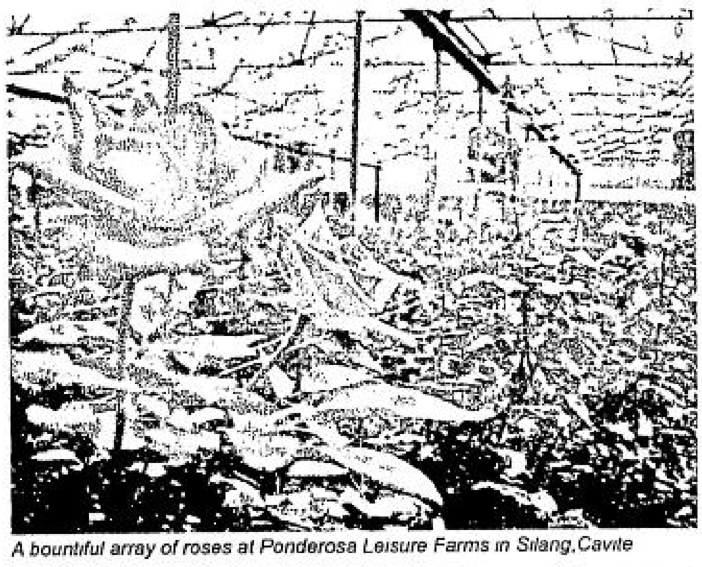
Thus in 1990, he formed Landco and gathered five of the top graduates of AIM that year who he believed shared his desire for a working environment that promotes creativity and a free flowing exchange of ideas. "I've always believed in teamwork and new ideas, and that in spite of my experience, I do not know everything; that somebody knows something better than I do. I wanted to share authority because I learned early on that participative management gets the best out of people. If I can harness all the energies and initiatives of people who I believe can be leaders of this company, I can create a company that's dynamic and innovative."

He did just that. Starting as a consultancy firm, Landco oversaw the planning and management of an estimated 80 development projects for some of the country's most prestigious real estate developers. The lessons it has painstakingly learned as a consultancy group have since guided Landco in its development and constant evolution. Francis V. Ceballos, the company's executive vice president and chief operating officer recapitulates, "This experience as a consultancy group gave us the eye for the needs and trends in the market. It made us sensitive to what our market wants. This is both a skill and an art which has allowed us to be so in tune with the market."

In 1994, upon forming an alliance with Metro Pacific Corporation, Landco cut its teeth as a full-fledged real estate developer with a string of high-profile pioneering developments. At the core of these developments are Landco's five strategic business units with their own areas of expertise: Residential Resorts, Leisure Farms, Shopping Centers and Central Business Districts, First Homes and Memorial Parks.

Mr. Burgos puts the company's direction succinctly as "the passion for value and the passion for doing a good job. Before we come out with a set of products, we scan the environment, look at the demographics and the competition, and determine what we can offer differently. Always, we zero in on a lifestyle that our potential market can be comfortable with. Second, we make sure that our projects are built and completed as promised."

At a time when the prevailing economic conditions present a not-so-ideal environment for the property sector, Landco confidently relies on its distinct expertise—in innovations in product, pricing, and promotions geared towards a particular lifestyle—to stay in sound form. "We've always considered thinking of unique concepts and innovative projects in the midst of hard times as an adventure. That's how the company attained its present stature in the first place. There's a willingness to take risks, to do something different," says Mr. Ceballos.


A bountiful array of roses at Ponderosa Leisure Farms in Silang,Cavite

Landco carries on the inimitable spirit of enterprise and daring as it pursues a host of developments in 2004. Already in the pipeline are various expansion plans on existing projects to accommodate rising demand as well as a Landco residential complex in the heart of the metropolis.

To keep his passion evergreen, Mr. Burgos frequently travels abroad. But then again, his jaunts are not purely for pleasure as he doggedly pursues fresh design trends and innovative ideas. "I travel to recharge and get inspiration. But I can't help looking at revolutionary concepts. I get inspired by other people doing things that I never thought of and I think of a million ways to innovate on them," he says smilingly. And, of course, such a keen interest on changing landscapes has always kept him in the forefront of an industry where a sense of daring, inventiveness and enterprise spell success.

Lakewood Golf Estates is Nueva Ecija's most exclusive high-end residential golf community. Truly redefining lifestyle in Central Luzon, Lakewood Golf Estates offers the first and only golf and country club in Nueva Ecija featuring two clubhouses, an 18-hole all weather championship golf course designed by internationally acclaimed Nelson and Haworth, and an aquatic driving range.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

LPC Board of Directors, left to right: Augusto Palisoc, Jr., Atty. Victoria Tamayao, Manuel V. Pangilinan (Chairman), Jose Ma. Lim, Victor Limlingan, Edward Tortorici.

Left to right: Francis V. Ceballos, Alfred Xerez-Burgos, Jr. (President and CEO), Antonio V. Syyap, Arlene G. Maglibay

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EXCITING PLACES dynamic people

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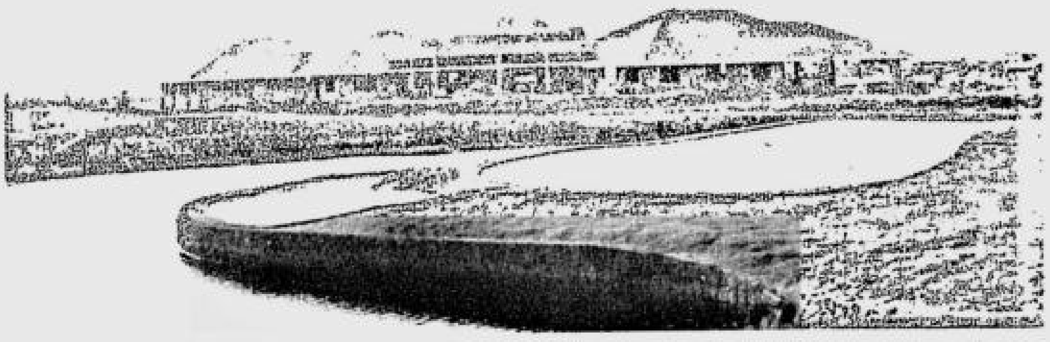

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Left to right Francis V. Ceballos, Alfred Xerez-Burgos, Jr. (President and CEO), Antonio V. Syyap, Arlene G Maglibay

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WHAT'S UP?

LEISURE FARMS

2003

Maria Luisa Perez-Rubio stands amidst her garden of flowers in Allessandra's Fields in Ponderosa Leisure Farms

Keeping the lead in the agro-tourism and residential farming market, Leisure Farms has had a fast-paced, jam-packed 2003, living up to its role as a pioneer development and business model.

This year picks up the pace with not just one but two Leisure Farms projects. After Leisure Farms I, an agro-tourism and residential hobby farm project in Lemery, Batangas, comes Ponderosa Leisure Farms, a residential flower garden village in Silang, Cavite, another innovative second home and leisure farming concept.

Leisure Farms I: Lemery, Batangas

Things continue to take shape at Leisure Farms: since the October 2001 groundbreaking, much has been rapidly sprouting up at the 116-hectare site. As 2002 witnessed the development of farms and technologies at the Demo Farms (Herb garden, Hydroponics, Coffee Farm, and the completion of basic utilities: water reservoir and electrical lines), 2003 marked the completion of Primary water distribution lines, the Organic Integrated Model Farm, the much-awaited Village Store structure, Linear Lake, Fishing Pond, and the completion of concrete roads and street lighting. With nearly everything in place, hobby farmers are set to begin building their farm houses, and planning and building their farms. Laboratory farms have been put in place to make sure farming goes smoothly for everyone.

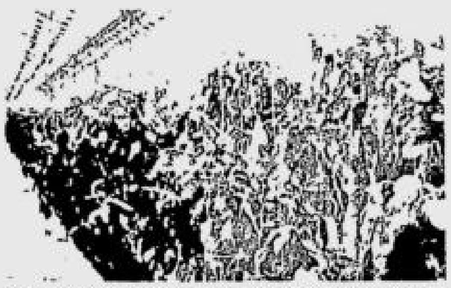
The Organic Integrated Model Farm

And, with the Village Store to be filled with a harvest of produce, farm supplies, gourmet goods, and other specialty items, Leisure Farms becomes another destination place and tourist attraction for Tagaytay visitors.

With farmlots nearly sold out, Leisure Farms seeks to meet a 2004 completion target, marking another milestone in the company's mission to create distinctive lifestyles, and in the development of the country's agricultural and tourism sectors.

Leisure Farms 2: Silang, Cavite

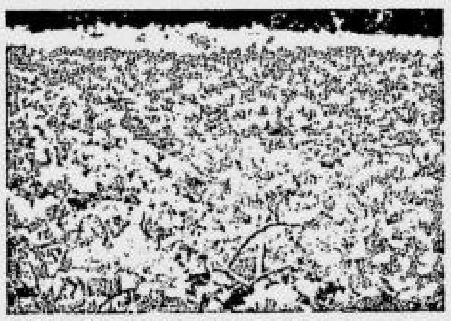
"Just as Leisure Farms in Lemery is the first development to combine farm living with resort features, Ponderosa is the first to combine a garden community with residential resort features," says Alfred Xerez-Burgos II, SBU-Head of Leisure Farms. "It is the ultimate in country living in terms of quality of location, development, and lifestyle activities."



One of Leisure Farms' Demo Farms, Hydroponics is a Netafim-supplied technology for growing plants that uses water and fertilizer (no need for soil).

The Village Store is a one-stop shop for seed, supply and gourmet goods.

Quickly blooming into a rustic Mexican Spanish-inspired garden community, Ponderosa is set to bloom with various features and amenities: Campo Verde campsite, Las Rosas outdoor dining restaurant, Tienda de Flores marketplace, Casa Ponderosa model house, Villa Ponderosa clubhouse, themed gardens, a meditation garden, a swimming pool, a playground, and the Plaza Ma. Luisa, the village plaza, named after Dona Ma. Luisa Perez-Rubio president of Ponderosa Farms, Inc



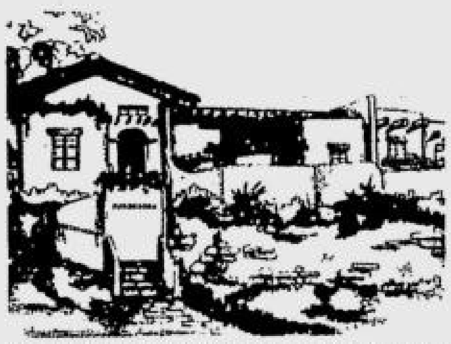
A pleasant sea of colors and scents await guests and friends in Ponderosa Leisure Farms, a 51-hectare flower garden village in Silang, Cavite

For now, the temporary outdoor dining area (Las Rosas) has been erected, and the village's main road and main drainage pipe have been set in place.

Spreading the good life to new places, creating communities while promoting the enjoyment and love of nature, Leisure Farms continues to plant seeds and harvest the fullness of life.

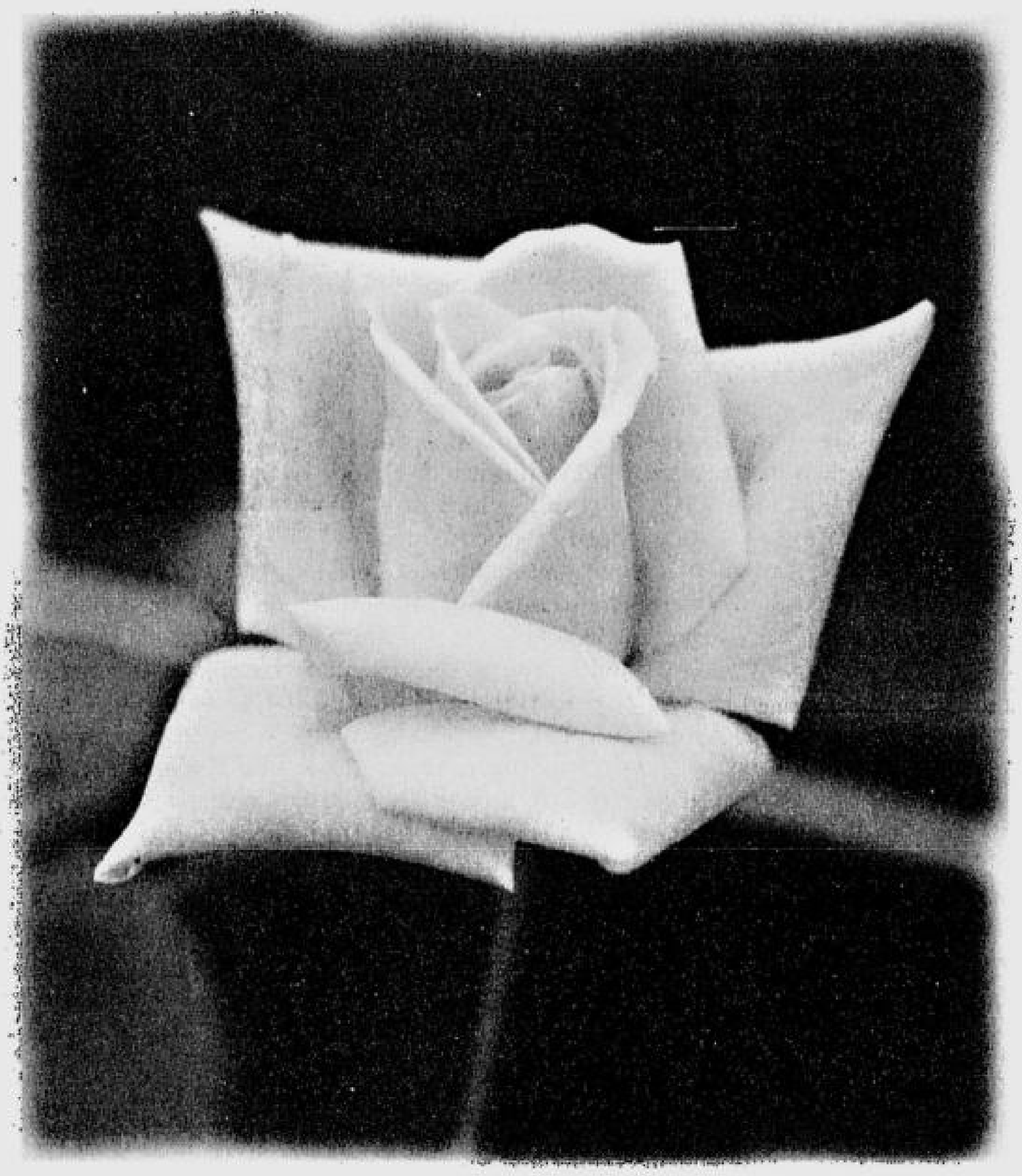
Leisure Farms, located in Lemery, Batangas, is a quality development by Landco Pacific Corporation. Landco's second Leisure Farms project is Ponderosa Leisure Farms, a 53-hectare flower garden village, in a classic Mexican-Spanish theme, located in Silang, Cavite.

For more information, please call 8093631 loc 123 or (0920) 910-7145



Outdoor dining "Las Rosas" is one of the soon-to-rise structures for Ponderosa. Perspective by HBO+EMTB, a New Zealand design firm.

Officers of Landco and Ponderosa Farms (L-R) Carlos Perez-Rubio, vice-president of Ponderosa Farms, Inc; Francis V. Caballos, COO of LPC; Maria Perez-Rubio president of Ponderosa Farms Inc.; Alfred Xerez-Burgos, Jr., CEO of LPC; and, Alfred Xerez-Burgos III, VP and Group Head of Leisure Farms



Living Passion

Bursts of color, scents in the air. At Ponderosa Leisure Farms, you can indulge your passions in fifty-three hectares of gardens, haciendas, and flower-lined pathways in classic Mexican-Spanish style. Just less than an hour from Makati, you'll find everything you need to live life with passion.

Ponderosa
LEISURE
FARMS

Life's Garden in Bloom

www.landcopacific.com
FOR ANNOUNCEMENT PURPOSES ONLY

Lifestyle communities created by:
LANDCO PACIFIC
CORPORATION

In partnership with:
PONDEROSA FARMS, INC.

RESIDENTIAL RESORTS
PARADISE FOUND

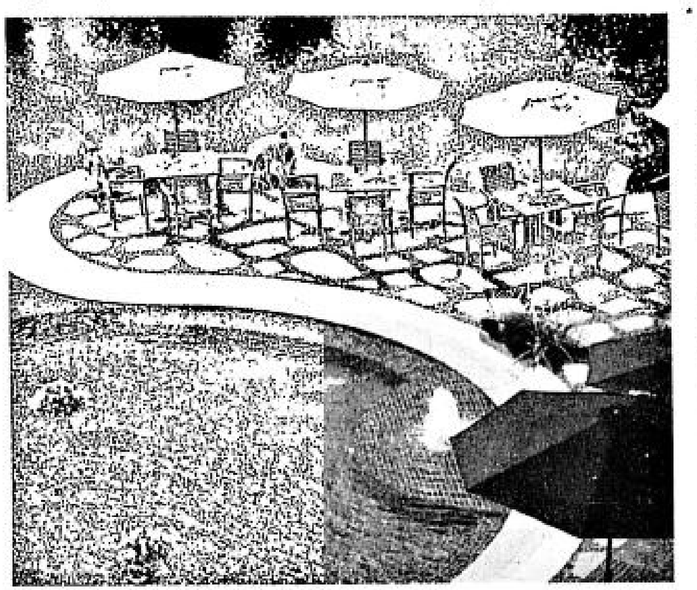
Pretend you're on a cruise in Bora Bora where aquamarine waters lap at the beach all day with a singsong beat and palm trees sway to the gentle breeze. Except that you are not on a yacht and your feet are comfortably dry. As it turns out, paradise exists after all—just 30 minutes from Tagaytay. Located off the beaten track along Nasugbu's coastline lie the exclusive twin enclaves of Peninsula de Punta Fuego and Terrazas de Punta Fuego—the breathtaking centerpieces of Landco's continuous innovation in real estate development.

"The key motivations for the twin developments are nature, health and wellness, family and friends, and togetherness. But going to Peninsula de Punta Fuego and Terrazas de Punta Fuego is not a once-a-year treat to get away from a stressful nine-to-five job. Punta Fuego's proximity to Manila makes the experience something that the owners can do on a regular basis," says Pat Villano, Landco's vice president and head of the strategic business unit for residential resorts.

Although the inspirations suggest a laidback appeal, the landscape and all the amenities therein provide utmost comfort and convenience. Set on a peninsula jutting out to the sea, Peninsula de Punta Fuego was designed to approximate the charms of a Spanish Mediterranean coastal community surrounded by a commanding view of the South China Sea.

Built on naturally sloping terrain, Terrazas de Punta Fuego, on the other hand, is made up of seven pocket enclaves hemmed by lush vegetation. Its topography provides the perfect backdrop to the architectural scheme that fuses Hispanic design with Asian Tropical influences. Beachcombers, inveterate sun worshippers, and sea lovers will get their fill of sun, sea, and sand in Terrazas' 800-meter white sand beach, which is reputed to be the best swimming beach along the Nasugbu coastline.

Such an intrepid approach to development can only come from a mind willing to challenge orthodox building principles. Says Mr. Villano, "The Residential Resort Group of Landco is impelled by the company's inherent desire to serve niche markets with distinctive aspirations and needs. But more than that, Landco has always persevered to serve the communities around its projects and to protect the environment from wanton destruction. I think it's true for anyone with a passion for this world to find the right venue to be able to align your personal vision with the group you work with—one that shares your values," he says.


Pools at Terrazas Beach Club

Aside from its inimitable and pioneering development projects, Landco takes pride in its roster of SBU (Strategic Business Unit) heads whose sense of daring and innovation have catapulted the company into the forefront of the development industry. Here, the group takes a much-deserved breather from their hectic schedules.

Standing, left; Alby Xerez-Burgos; VP and SBU Head of Leisure Farms; Rollie T. Manalili, VP and SBU Head of First Homes; Pat A. Villano, VP and SBU Head of Residential Resorts; Etchin L. Sumagang, VP and CFO; Seated, left; Alfred Xerez-Burgos, Jr., President and CEO; Arlene G. Magtibay, VP and SBU Head of Shopping Centers and CBD's; Francis V. Ceballos, EVP and COO; Cris M. Zuluaga, VP and SBU Head of Memorial Parks; and Ellen B. Maristela, VP and SBU Head of First Homes .

MEMORIAL PARKS
BEAUTY IN BLISS

Call her Ms. Joe Black if you will, but this lady is hardly a somber harbinger of death. "Do I look like a memorial park queen?" Maricris Zuluaga, the effervescent head of Landco's Memorial Parks division, asks with a guffaw. In truth, Ms. Zuluaga's gift of gab makes her an engaging and lively raconteur—hardly the type who would make a pitch for burial lots and last homes.

Like this engaging lady, Forest Lake, as the memorial park developments of Landco are called, couldn't be farther from the cold, impersonal burial ground people are so used to seeing. Whereas oversized crosses or gigantic statuaries of the risen Christ adorn the entrances of most memorial parks, Forest Lake's gateways look more like grand entrances into an opulent estate.

Sprawling lawn estates of Forest Lake Zamboanga

High concrete perimeter walls cover the Forest Lake memorial parks with beautifully designed signage and steel gates at the entrance. Amid well-manicured lawns one usually finds delightfully cascading pools and waterways bordered by shade trees and ornamental hedges. Charming pergolas and gazebos located in strategic points in the park provide rest stops, shade and places for quiet reflection. The elegant chapels within the park play venues to memorial services of all religious persuasions. Meanwhile, children who can't resist romping around can while the time away at the children's playground. All over, sculptures with the environment as a recurring theme, dot the landscape to provide aesthetic points of interest.

Within the perimeter of Forest Lake are areas for mausoleums where owners can build vertical structures. Even here, Landco's penchant for consistency prevails. "Mausoleum owners also have to follow design guidelines, so there's a sense of uniformity throughout the park. When you actually maintain that standard, the value of the property appreciates."

Apart from the physical attributes of Forest Lake, a strong sense of community is fostered through the parks' various social activities, making it a true hub not just of the dearly departed but of the living.

Since its launch in Zamboanga, Forest Lake has grown by leaps and bounds with its unique concept duplicated in General Santos, Iloilo, Davao and Biñan. Without doubt, the success of Forest Lake Memorial Parks owes much to Landco's skill in challenging widespread notions, and modifying products steeped in tradition into relevant and functional spaces for the pleasure and enjoyment of the market it serves.

LEISURE FARMS
BACK TO BASICS

Family harvesting, one of the many fun-filled activities in Leisure Farms, Lemery, Batangas

It's easy to imagine Alfred Xerez Burgos III, or Alby, inside a glass and chrome monolith, holding court behind a ponderous hardwood desk like a third generation mandarin dispensing advice. At the young age of 33, Alby shares the serious task of mapping out the strategic corporate direction of Landco as its vice president and head of the company's Leisure Farms portfolio.

Developed as a concept almost three years ago when Alby was doing his thesis in AIM, Leisure Farms offers upscale city dwellers a second home with just a wee bit unusual purpose: to get their hands dirty. After an extensive research study to get the pulse of the retirable market, Landco discovered that most of them were closet farm buffs who longed to cultivate the soil.

True to its objective of creating communities and lifestyles, Landco launched the first ever Leisure Farms in Lemery, Batangas. Aside from its fertile soil, Lemery also offered the advantage of propinquity to two highly developed localities: the resort community of Tagaytay and Sta. Rosa, which acts as the gateway to the south.

With lot cuts ranging from 1,000 to 2,500 square meters, Leisure Farms provides the weekend farmer ample elbowroom to utilize his skill in tilling the land and cultivating crops. The combination of native-inspired houses, vegetable and fruit patches, natural pathways shaded with trees, fishing lakes and blue sky conjure visions of a self-sustaining and flourishing hacienda.

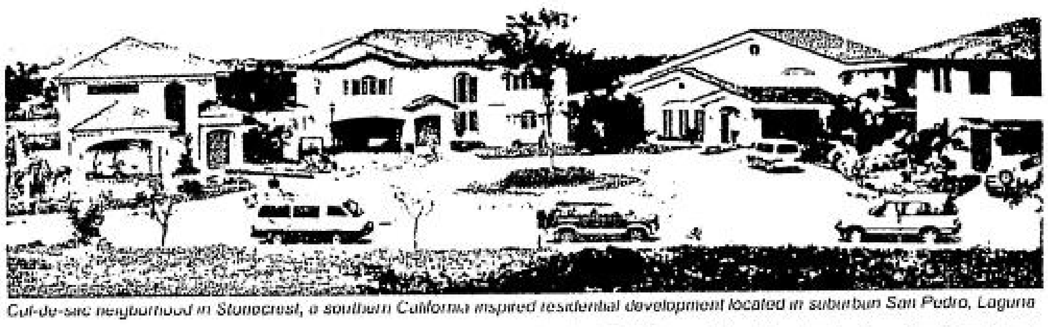
Inspired by the success of the first Leisure Farms, Landco inked a partnership with renowned flower grower Doña Maria Luisa Perez Rubio and launched Ponderosa Leisure Farms in 2003. Situated in the rich hillocks of Silang, Cavite, Ponderosa is blessed with temperate weather conditions and just the right admixture of humidity and sunshine to ensure a healthy floral growth. Designed as an idyllic Mexican Spanish village, it makes for a perfect vacation garden community where one can tend to his flowerbed or simply laze at home amid the spellbinding sight and aroma of midsummer blooms.

Less stout-hearted developers would have been dispirited by the extensive detail and exacting systems at work in the two Leisure Farms today, but Landco remains true to its noble objective. Explains Alby, "In Leisure Farms, we offer a healthier lifestyle, one that seeks fulfillment by going back to basics We know the joy homeowners feel when they show their children how vegetables grow from the ground, in an environment where natural beauty abounds, it is easier for them to appreciate God's gifts."

FIRST HOMES
LIVING IN LUXURY

While it's hard to imagine Cabanatuan City as a residential address of note, it's even more surprising that Landco has built a high-profile development project in the city called Lakewood City. "Landco has always prided itself with the ability to divine new markets wherever they're emerging," avers Ellen Maristela, one of the company's strategic business unit heads in charge of its First Homes group.

Located on a prime flatland property along Maharlika Highway, Lakewood City boasts of beautifully landscaped parks, untouched groves and spacious roads lined by trees. The stately homes inside Lakewood City reflect a Spanish-Mediterranean design leitmotiv. Its centerpiece is the 60-hectare, all-weather championship golf course that serves as an extension of the garden of the fairway lots.


Cul-de-sac neighborhood in Stonecrest, a southern California inspired residential development located in suburban San Pedro, Laguna

Down south in Laguna, Landco's premier residential development, Stonecrest follows the design legacy of the elegant mission houses of Southern California built in charming cul-de-sac neighborhoods. Up north in Bulacan, Landco is currently expanding Waterwood Park, a handsome community built with ecologically-engineered nature theme in mind. Other Landco projects in the North include Woodside Garden Village in Urdaneta, Pangasinan with its American-Georgian theme and an upcoming project in Calasiao, Pangasinan.

More than providing living spaces of breathtaking beauty, each of Landco's development project instills a desire to live a healthy, stress-free and well-rounded life. "More than creating residences, the First Homes group of Landco is tasked to build communities where individuals can develop to their fullest potential by interacting with other people, with nature and with God," Ms. Maristela exclaims.

This, in essence, is what keeps Ms. Maristela inspired to keep scaling new heights under the Landco banner. "I joined Landco 12 years ago and I have worked under all the pioneers of this company. What keeps me inspired is the care that management has for people. Within the company, it allows people to grow. Outside the company, it spares no effort to satisfy, often going the extra mile to ensure that customers get their money's worth. A concern for the welfare of others has always been part of Landco's core values."

SHOPPING CENTERS & CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICTS
MALLS WITH A DIFFERENCE

Drawing from her extensive experience in the development of shopping malls, Landco vice president and SBU head for Shopping Centers & Central Business Districts Arlene Magtibay helped conceptualize, develop and manage the three Landco shopping mall developments.

"Landco's malls are different in the sense that we've tailor fitted them for the community they're located in. Remember that Landco was responsible for the development of the Tutuban Center where we were consultants and general managers. The experience and the eventual success of that shopping center helped us acquire the discipline and style that we feel run congruent to our corporate image and philosophy," she says.

This philosophy offers local entrepreneurs and retailers the opportunity to conduct business in an upscale cosmopolitan setting thereby stimulating local economic activity in the area. Thus, Landco has actively pursued the incorporation of the cluster-type stalls in its mall developments.

PACIFIC MALL
LUCENA

"This enables us to serve both the entrepreneurs and the buying public. The practice also attracts new markets, particularly people who are used to shopping in the traditional wet markets. The minute they go to the mall, they find better satisfaction because of the mall's built-in facilities for convenience, the pocket-friendly prices, and the mall's added appeal as a center for leisure," Ms. Magtibay points out.

Still, Landco continuously finds ways to improve its malls and better serve its public. Expansion plans in the Pacific Mall Legazpi and NE Pacific Mall in Cabanatuan are already underway. In Pacific Mall Lucena the development of the Landco Plaza has been jump-started beginning with Gerry's Grill as its centerpiece. Once completed, this outdoor area is envisioned to become the center of nightlife for Lucena complete with cafes, bars, and small eateries.

By now, plans to put up at least five shopping malls in the next three years are already in the drawing board.

Guiding her in creating commercial hubs significant to the communities they serve are Landco's mission and vision. She says, "Landco can pride itself with the discipline it has developed through the years. We do not just plunge into a project headlong without knowing the dynamics and fundamentals of the undertaking." An indefatigable worker, Ms. Magtibay de-stresses by going to the gym and yes, malling. "I love shopping! And besides, I have to be a mall rat to know the competition!"

Pacific Mall Lucena' low prices, high quality goods as well as the fun and entertainment of a modern mall

RESIDENTIAL RESORTS

PARADISE FOUND

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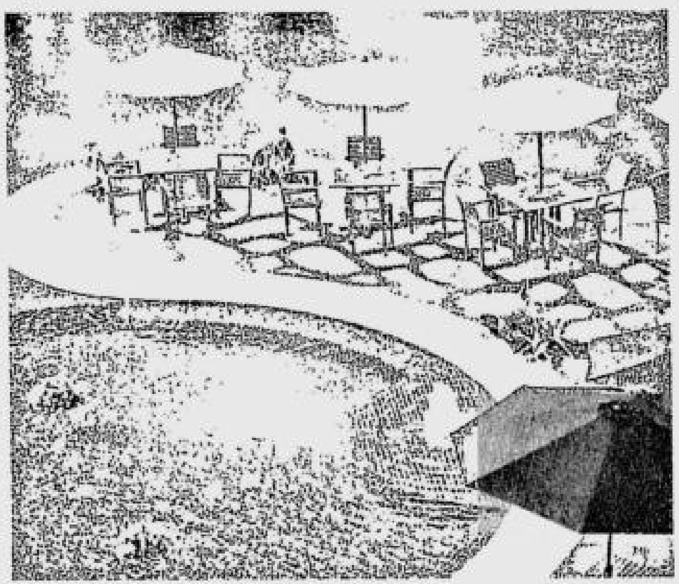
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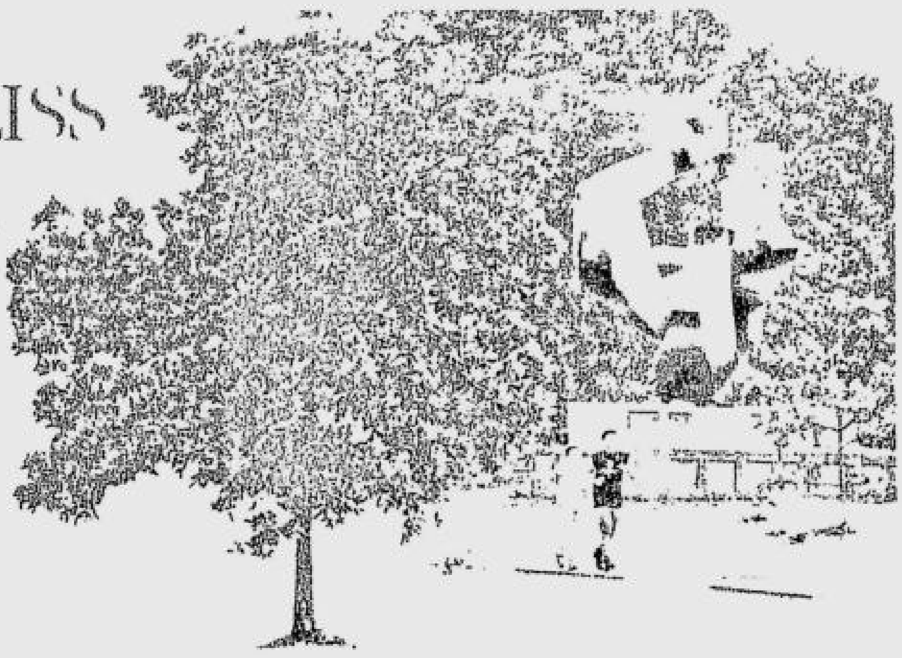

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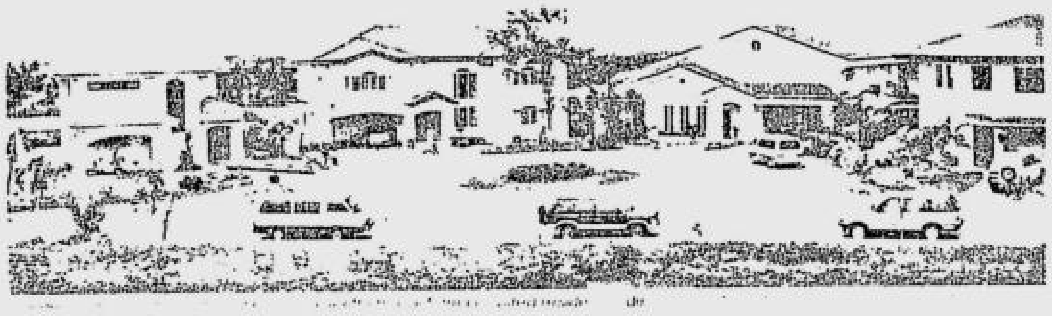

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BASICS

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SHOPPING CENTERS & CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICTS

MALLS WITH A DIFFERENCE

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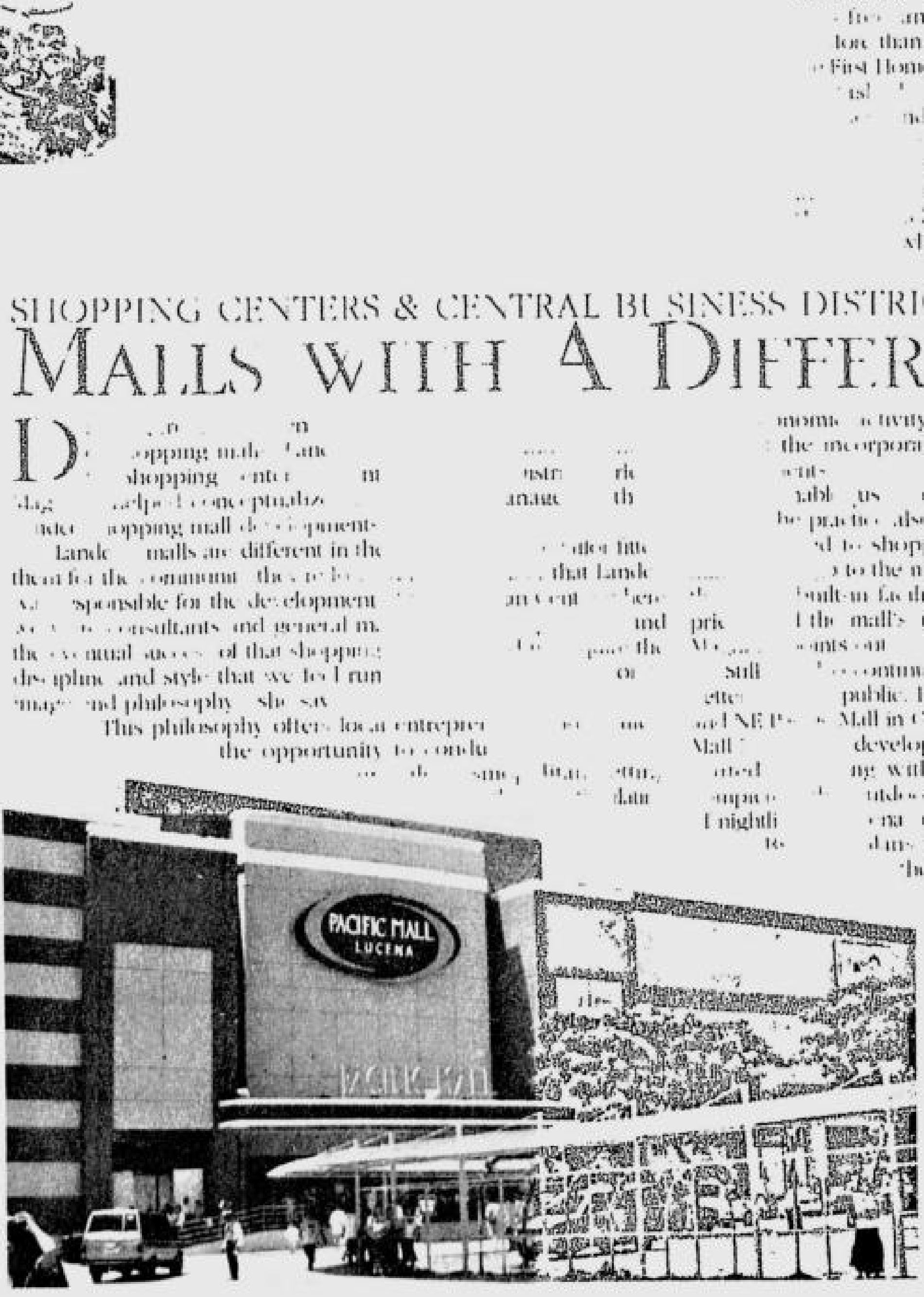

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Landco Pacific SIGNIFICANT MILESTONES

July 2003

Forest Lake General Santos Launch

FOREST LAKE & CARCON REALTY
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MOA signing between Forest Lake (FL) and Carcon Realty Corporation for the development of Forest Lake San Carlos (Gen. Santos City). Shown in photo are: standing (from left): Eric Vincent Escalona (Operations Head, Carcon Realty), Maricris Zuluaga (VP/COO, FL), Alfred Xerez-Burgos III (President, FL). Sitting (from left) Alex Escalona (President, Carcon Realty), Alfred Xerez-Burgos, Jr.(Chairman of the Board, FL), Francis V. Ceballos (EVP and COO, Landco Pacific Corporation)

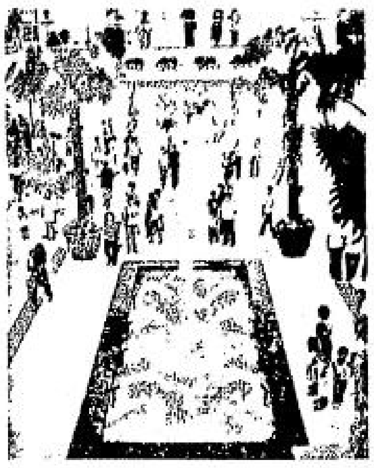
FOREST LAKE

Entrance gate of Forest Lake (Gen. Santos City)

September 2003

Pacific Mall Lucena Grand Launch

Leading the ribbon cutting ceremony are: (from left) Pacific Mall Corporation Chairman Frank Gaisano, Lucena City Mayor Ramon Talaga, LPC President and CEO Alfred Xerez-Burgos, Jr., and Smart Communications President Napoleon Nazareno

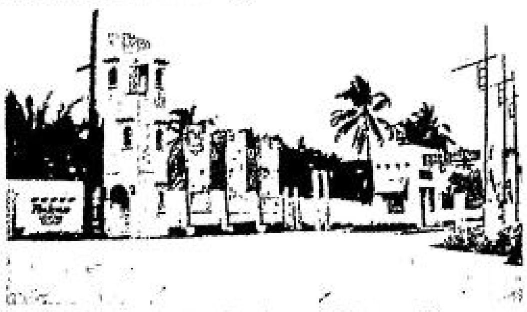


Pacific Mall Lucena's grand atrium. Located at the heart of Lucena City, the three-level shopping complex is a joint venture of Landco Pacific and Metro Gaisano Group of Cebu.

October 2003

Ponderosa Leisure Farms Ground Breaking

Ponderosa Leisure Farms, Inc. President Maria Luisa Perez-Rubio (center) together with LPC President and CEO Alfred Xerez-Burgos, Jr. and LPC Chairman Manuel V. Pangilinan

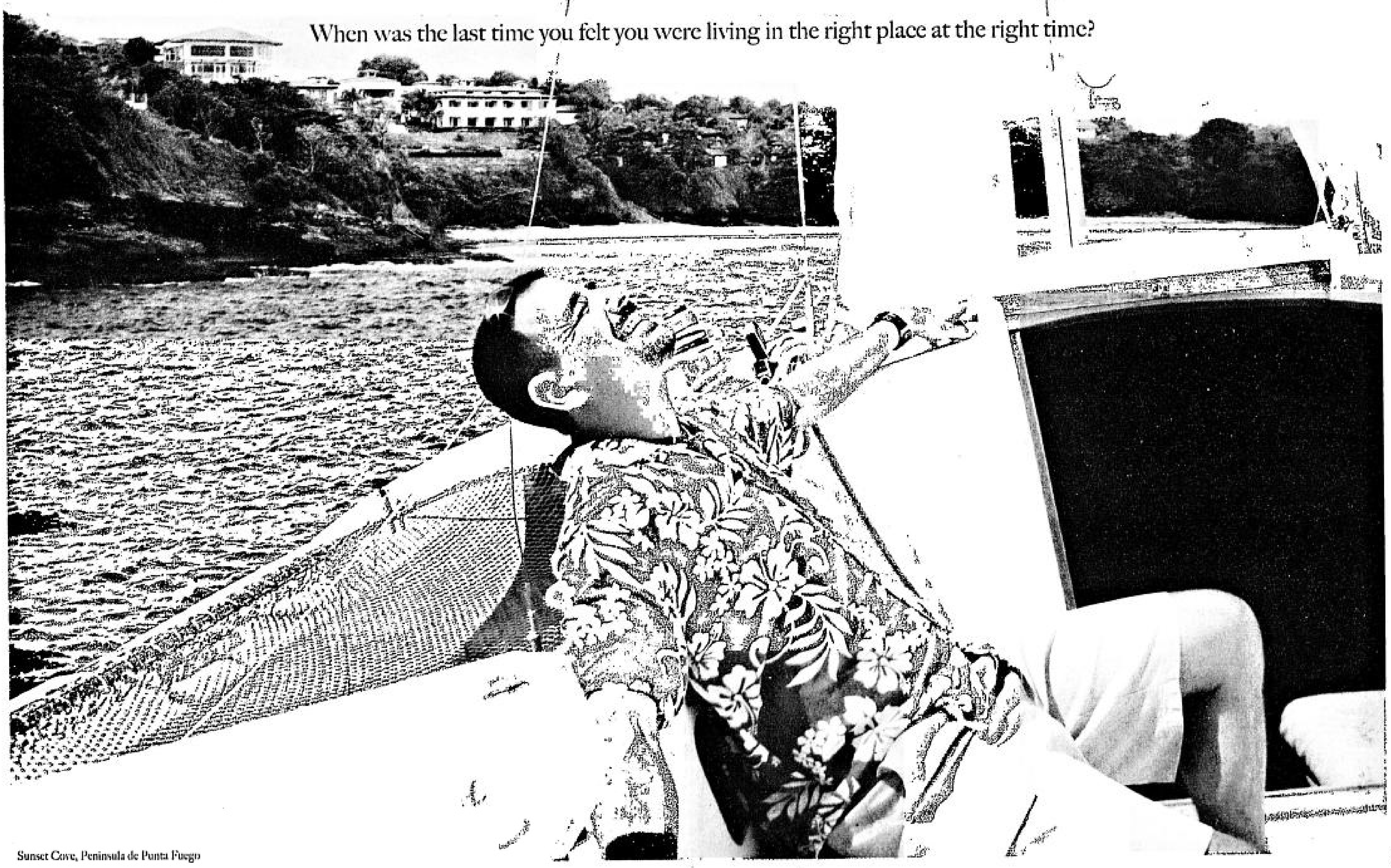


Plaza de Bougainvillea. Ponderosa's Entrance Plaza

January 2004

Landco-BPI Memorandum of Agreement

In response to the warm market reception of Terrazas de Punta Fuego, Landco Pacific Corp. signed a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with the Bank of the Philippine Islands (BPI), acting as trustee for Loyola Plans Consolidated, Inc., to develop portions of the adjacent Munting Buhangin property of the Puyat family located in Nasugbu, Batangas. Situated at the highest portions of Munting Buhangin, the property will become the newest prime phase of this exclusive seaside community. Shown at the MOA signing are (from left) Marichu Rasca, BPI portfolio officer; Adelbert Legasto, BPI Senior vice-president; Hesusa Concepcion, Loyola President and CEO; Gil Puyat, Jr., Loyola chairman of the board; Alfred Xerez-Burgos, Jr., Landco President and CEO; Pedro Roxas, Roxaco president; Ramon Pedrosa, Peace Inc. Chairman; and Alberto Pedrosa, Peace, Inc. vice-president.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Public Relations Society of the Philippines

39th Anvil Awards

PRSP honors the best and the brightest

By Marlet Salazar
Photos by Jun Capulong

ALTHOUGH the competition is known to be tough and the standards are high, the 39th Anvil Awards judges were generous enough this year to name two awardees each for the much-coveted Bronze Anvil and the Grand Anvil awards.

Give a Life Foundation received the Grand Anvil for its "Give a Life Now!" along with Shell Philippines Exploration B.V.'s "Sitio Agusuhin Development Program."

The next much-anticipated award was the Bronze Anvil

PRSP/H2

Grand Anvil Award: Give a Life Now! by Give A Life Charity Foundation

Grand Anvil Award: Sitio Agusuhin Development Program by Shell Philippines Exploration B.V.

Messages

IT IS with great pride that I salute the Public Relations Society of the Philippines (PRSP), the distinguished Board of Jurors, the participants, and most importantly, the winners of this year's 39th Anvil Awards.

The much-coveted Anvil Awards, which truly recognizes outstanding public relations programs and projects, certainly generates public awareness for the community. I wish to congratulate all the participants and the winners for their efforts in producing exemplary and lasting programs and projects that inspire every Filipino to strive for a better and strong Republic.

I am deeply gratified to know that the men and women of the Public Relations Society of the Philippines continuously strive to enhance the public relations industry. The PRSP has gained prominence over the years as the premier organization for the public relations. I believe that the Anvil Awards is strong evidence that the PR profession has earned a status in our society worthy of respect. With the help of your profession, erroneous values are redirected and uplifted towards the achievement of our common aspirations.

Again, I commend the organizers, the PRSP, the participants and winners of this year's Anvil Awards.

Congratulations and Mabuhay!

GMArroyo
Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo
President
Republic of the Philippines

ONCE again, the moment comes for us to honor and pay tribute to the best and the brightest of the Public Relations profession as we give recognition to the best PR programs and tools of 2003. It is also a year of many firsts.

The number of entries submitted this year sets the record for being the highest yet in Anvil's 39-year history. The breadth and scope of the projects they cover and the strategic importance of the issues and concerns they address even further reflect the marked advances gained by the PR profession over the four decades of existence of the Public Relations Society of the Philippines.

The judges have also chosen to give two bronze Anvils as well as a Special Award for tools, further testimony to the bumper crop of entries we received this year.

The winning entries also represent public relations endeavors that not only push the frontiers of PR practice forward but also go beyond what was once considered traditional PR domain into pioneering work in nation-building, good governance and marketing of educational institutions.

We are proud to say that public relations has played a big role in the improvement of our lives, and that we, in the PRSP, continue to motivate our members in the creation of more programs that would truly inspire and uplift our society.

Amid the growing sphere of influence of public relations, we are privileged to serve in the leadership of the PRSP.

Our sincere congratulations to all the winners. Let us not tire of supporting one another in shaping our nation's future.

(Sgd.) WINSTON A. MARBELLA, APR
President
Public Relation Society of the Philippines

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The Anvil

THE PUBLIC Relations Society of the Philippines this year celebrates the 39th Anvil Awards, an annual event which has become a robust institution after more than three decades of existence.

Over the years, the Awards has gained tremendous prestige that it is now dubbed the "Oscar" of Public Relations. The quality of the winning entries, the standards for selection, the reputation of the board of judges, and the development and growth of PR, both as a profession and in practice are among the major factors that led to its acceptance and popularity.

The competition is conducted annually by the PRSP to give recognition to outstanding public relations programs of projects that are clearly identified with public interest and have a lasting impact and value.

It is awarded by a multi-sectoral jury which follow stringent norms and process of selection. There is no cash award, but it is much coveted and no award is given unless the standards are met.

There are two main categories: Institutional and Corporate PR Programs and Tools of Public Relations. Under these are several sub-categories by which entries are classified and judged and from which the Anvil Award of Merit and The Anvil Award of Excellence are chosen.

PRSP honors the best and the brightest

From page H1

which was given to the 7th Infantry Division, Philippine Army "The Aquino-Diokno Memorial" and to Avon Cosmetics Inc.'s "Winning the Fight Against Breast Cancer Photo Exhibit."

The De La Salle University received a Special Anvil Award for the "DLSU System President's Report."

The two major awards are given as overall winners, meaning they stood out among the very bests in the industry. Awardees for these were announced only during the event.

The 39th Annual Anvil Awards ceremonies were held on March 26, Friday, at the Isla Ballroom of Edsa Shangri-La Hotel in Mandaluyong City.

The prestigious annual award is given out by the Public Relations Society of the Philippines (PRSP), the leading professional organization of recognized public relations practitioners in the country.

In her opening remarks, Cynthia Gruet, chair of the 39th Anvil Awards and the marketing and public relations director of the Institute of Corporate Directors and Institute for Solidarity in Asia said of the recognition given, "The rich harvest focuses on positive messages and viable solutions to the concerns of a nation long-poised for progress."

Bronze Anvil Award:Aquino-Diokno Memorial by 7th Infantry Division, Philippine Army

Bronze Anvil Award: Winning the Fight Against Breast Cancer Photo Exhibit by Avon Cosmetics, Inc.

A total of 142 entries were screened this year setting a record for the award's almost four decades of existence.

"Going beyond the number, it is the quality of the entries that make them all winners," Gruet said. "Our judges attest to the 'edifying' experience of reading and evaluating the entries."

On hand to give out the awards were Gruet, and Winston Marbella, president of PRSP. Dr. Jesus Estanislao is the chair of the board of judges for this year's Anvil Awards.

"Many said they realized that in the middle of the problems of the country, there are highly commendable and serious efforts to fill in any vacuum or need crying for concern and support," Gruet added.

The invite called for attendees to come in jeans in line with the first ever winners of the PR Students Competition. The three school winners took home a cash prize plus a trophy.

The University of Asia and the Pacific took the first place with their "Ayos ba?" entry.

Ateneo de Manila University captured the second place with "Doing Good Feels Good... Give Me Five," and the New Era University took the third spot with "Bagong Pinoy... Di Mumurahin Kaya Wag Mumurahin"

The award was conceived in cooperation with the Institute for Solidarity in Asia and the World Bank Institute. Twelve schools from Metro Manila competed for the award.

"PRSP sends a message of hope in the power of the youth as the country's new generation of PR practitioners, leaders, nation-builders, and responsible citizens," Gruet said.

The Philippine Daily Inquirer hit it big too with three awards. An Award of Merit for the Institutional and Corporate Program category for "Inquirer's Newspaper Drive 2003," "Inquirer's Youth Readership Program," and "The New Job Market" is cited for revitalized product or service.

PDI chair Marixi Prieto, senior vice president for sales and marketing Renato Reinoso, publisher Isagani Yambot, marketing head Donald Lim, and Celine Madamba of the corporate affairs department were present to receive the awards.

The Anvil Awards is held annually in recognition to the exemplary works in public relations programs or projects that have gained public interest and have a lasting impact and value, as well as in communication tools that effectively implement PR programs.

The two main categories include the Institutional/Corporate PR Programs, and the Tools of Public Relations. Under these are several sub-categories by which entries are classified and judged.

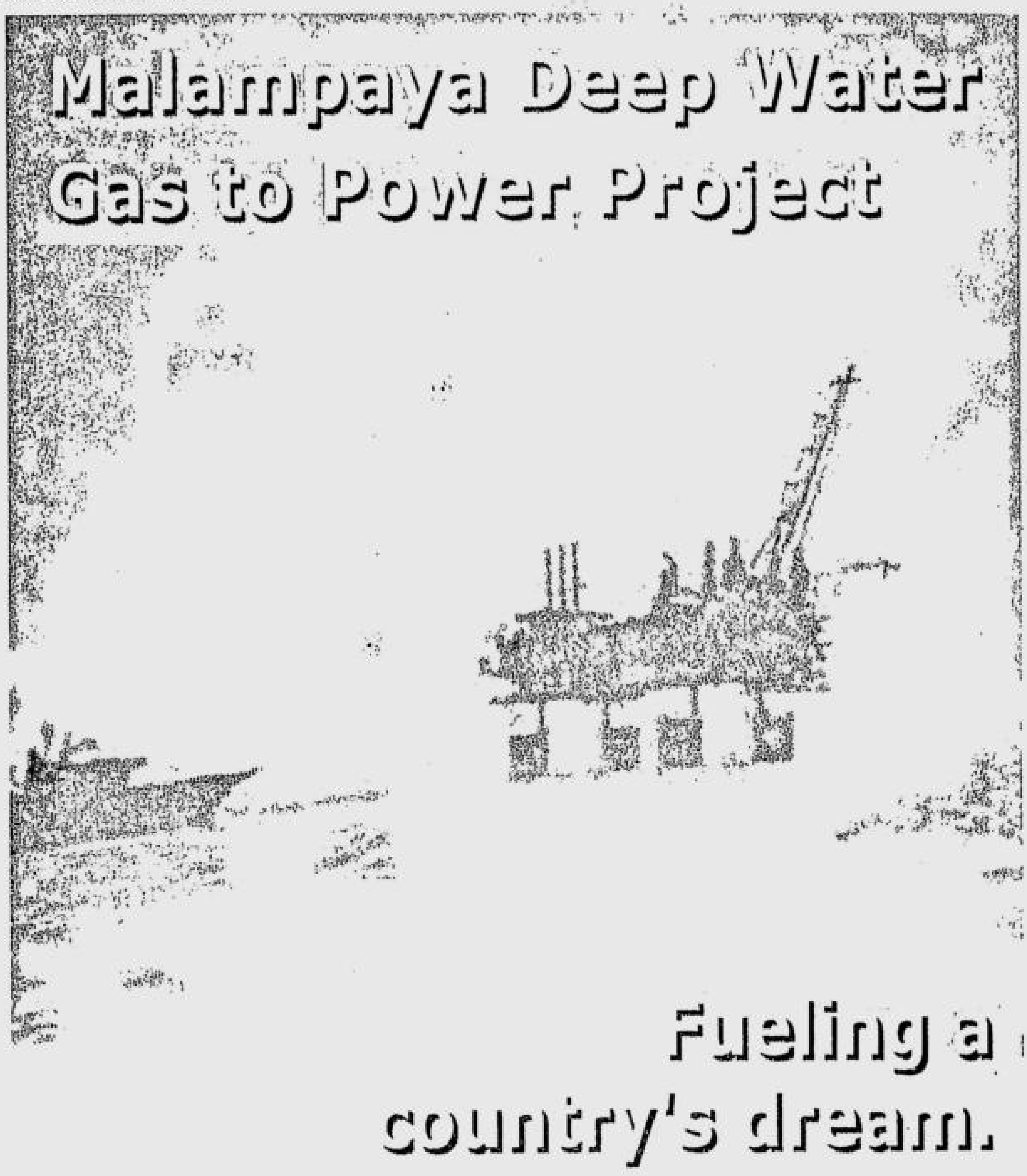
There are also two award categories: Awards for Merit and Awards for Excellence.

The quality of the winning entries, the standards for selection, the reputation of the board of judges, and the development and growth of PR, both as a profession and in practice are among the major factors that led to its acceptance popularity plus the prestige the award entails.

The Makiling Ensemble provided the guests with wonderful musical numbers that even liven up the delighted crowd.

The tabulation and auditing of score sheets submitted by the board of judges were done Joaquin Cunanan-PriceWaterhouseCoopers.

PR ladies enjoying a light moment during the Anvil Awards Night: Litz Manuel-Santana of Quezon Power, Karen Alparce-Villanueva of Pfizer, Chit Arce of GMA 7 and Evelyn Mamauag-Del Rosario of PLDT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OF THOSE WHO SERVED THE
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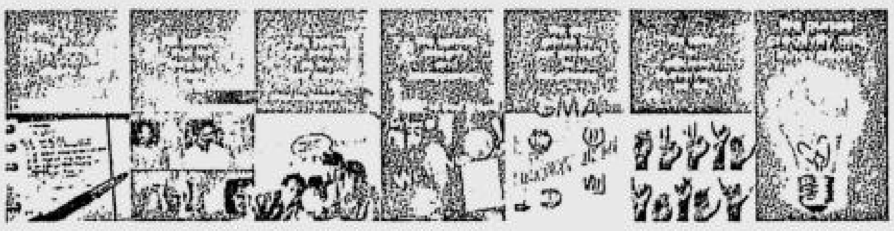
Pamilya
Ang Tinitibok
ng Pusong Pilipino

ANVIL AWARD OF EXCELLENCE
"Pamilya ang Tinitibok ng Pusong Pilipino"
GMA NETWORK'S VALUE MEALS ON-AIR CAMPAIGN



ANVIL AWARD OF MERIT
"Wagi Ka Kapuso, Sa Gawi at Ugali"
GMA NETWORK'S CORE VALUES CAMPAIGN

ANVIL AWARD OF MERIT
KAPUSO CORPORATE EQUITY CAMPAIGN

Greetings and Congratulations
to the PRSP on the success of the 39th ANVIL AWARDS

Mula sa inyong Kapuso

GMA
NETWORK

Lito Bunag, Vice Chairman, Tools Category

Luis Morales, Vice Chairman, Programs Category

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Programs			
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Messages

THERE is much to be said for awards that do not carry material reward, but instead ride high on the prestige and integrity they imbue recipients' programs with. The Public Relations Society of the Philippines' Anvil Awards have for the last 39 years proven that corporations, institutions, and individuals do place premium on the values of integrity and prestige as they translate to a good name.

The practice of Public Relations goes beyond mere polishing of an image, a brand, or a name. It should provide the principles and the conscience that steer an individual or a group towards communicating a call-to-action for the common good. The 39th Anvil Awards is proof enough that Public Relations indeed provides such a framework as demonstrated by the programs and tools entered in the competition. The vision that the participants provide demonstrate the seriousness by which Public Relations tackles the need to communicate with various publics as well as provide the medium for them to see and act on the common good.

39 years of the Anvil Awards have turned it into an institution. And it is at this turning point when, ready as it is, to begin life at 40 that PRSP focuses on the youth. The potent power of youth to change, reform, impact on trends and values is recognized as PRSP in cooperation with the Institute for Solidarity in Asia and the World Bank Institute gives recognition to Public Relations Programs conceptualized, designed, and implemented by students of various universities and colleges in Metro Manila. The 1st PR Students Competition hopefully becomes the touchstone for future youth efforts towards communicating values leading to responsible citizenship.

An enlightened generation as represented by the wonderful harvest of entries to the 39th Anvil Awards coupled with the fresh approaches of the youth truly makes PRSP and its Anvil Awards not just an institution but pioneering pacesetters in the field of Public Relations.

JESUS P. ESTANISLAO
Chairman
Board of Judges 39th Anvil Awards

HEARTWARMING is a word so apt for the 39th Anvil Awards' rich harvest of public relations programs and tools focused on positive messages and viable solutions to the concerns of a nation long-poised for growth. These messages clearly and loudly say hope, consistent hard work, governance, and working together for the common good.

The 39th Anvil Awards proves, more than anything else, that there is good news around; that there are serious, sustainable programs implemented and being implemented; that there is genuine concern from both government and private business. Common to all these is the role of public relations practice in breathing life to a germ of an idea and creating the environment for a call to action. Our participants to the 39th Anvil Awards demonstrate very clearly how this role has been played and indeed, played with excellence.

As the prestigious Anvil Awards enters its 40th year, the Public Relations Society of the Philippines clothes it with an even more pronounced relevance by launching the 1st PR Students' Competition. PRSP sends a message of hope in the power of the youth as the country's new generation of PR practitioners, leaders, nation-builders, and responsible citizens. The twelve entries by students from different Metro Manila schools combine the seriousness, viability, and understanding of the public's need so essential to the practice of public relations. The youth, thus, provide the fresh approach and relevance in public relations' continuing effort to reach various publics.

On behalf of the Public Relations Society of the Philippines and the 39th Anvil Awards Committee, I express most sincerely my appreciation to the participants whose programs and tools are all worthy of credit and respect. I also wish to make special mention of the Board of Judges who took the process of reading and evaluating each and every entry with fairness, appreciation, and integrity.

Congratulations to all the winners! May we see more of public relations efforts translate to sustainable programs and tools for the common good.

CYNTHIA M. JOSON-GRUET
Chair, 39th Anvil Awards and PRSP Internal Vice President

Pfizer Continues Tradition of Leadership, Excellence and Community Service

We at Pfizer dedicate ourselves to helping people by discovering, developing and providing innovative, safe and effective healthcare products that lead to healthier, longer and happier lives. We are determined to continue to save lives, prevent diseases and improve the quality of life of Filipinos.

True to the Pfizer tradition of serving the community, we celebrate our 50th anniversary in the Philippines this year with a series of community projects and innovative programs for our partners in healthcare. Through the Pfizer Foundation, we have joined forces with government and various private organizations to provide better access to healthcare, especially the needy and medically underserved communities. In the recent years leading to our Philippine milestone, we have created as well, programs outside of the healthcare industry, allowing us to positively affect the lives of more Filipinos.

For us, to live our value of community and make it an integral part of our celebration is in many ways a manifestation of who we are and what we stand for.

Being recognized for these works truly encourages us to carry on and create meaningful programs that will make a difference in as many lives as possible.

These awards will stand with their predecessors in a place of honor – anniversary gifts that we are very proud and humbled to receive on behalf of our employees, our partners and every Filipino that have inspired us in the last half century.

Maraming Salamat!

2002

Grand Anvil
"Read to Lead: A Reading Advocacy Campaign of Visine"
Aimed at promoting reading and reviving this habit among the youth to prepare them for their leadership roles in the future

Anvil Award of Excellence
"Read to Lead: A Reading Advocacy Campaign of Visine"

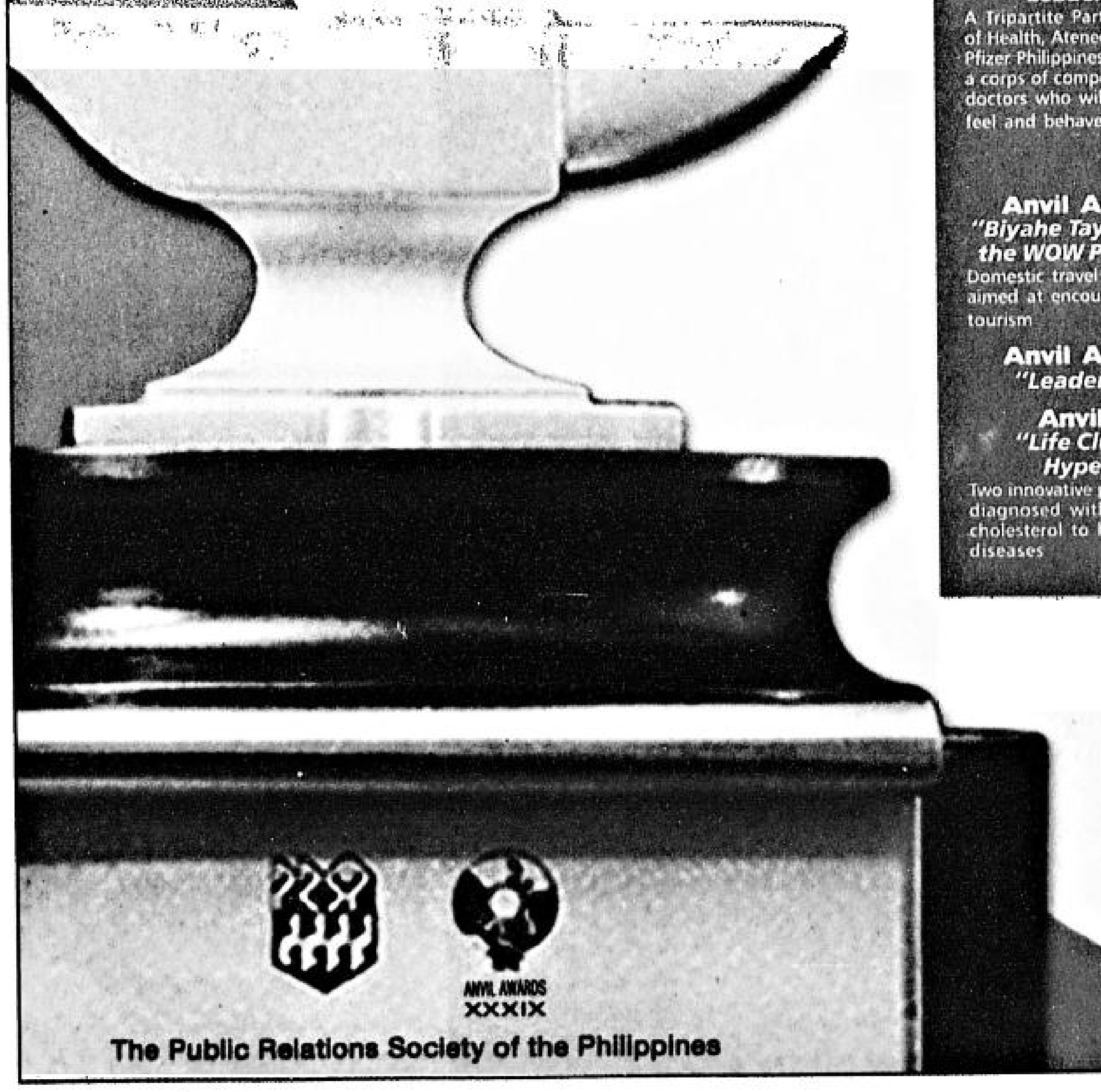
Anvil Award of Merit
"Leaders for Health Project"
A Tripartite Partnership among the Department of Health, Ateneo Graduate School of Business and Pfizer Philippines Foundation, aimed at developing a corps of competent, professional and committed doctors who will reshape the way Filipinos think, feel and behave towards health

2003

Anvil Award of Excellence
"Biyahe Tayo" Song / MTV as Tool of the WOW Philippines, Biyahe Tayo!
Domestic travel advocacy campaign of Bonamine aimed at encouraging economic growth through tourism

Anvil Award of Excellence
"Leaders for Health Project"

Anvil Award of Merit
"Life Club and the Science of Hypertension Program"
Two innovative patient support programs for those diagnosed with high blood pressure and high cholesterol to help them properly manage their diseases



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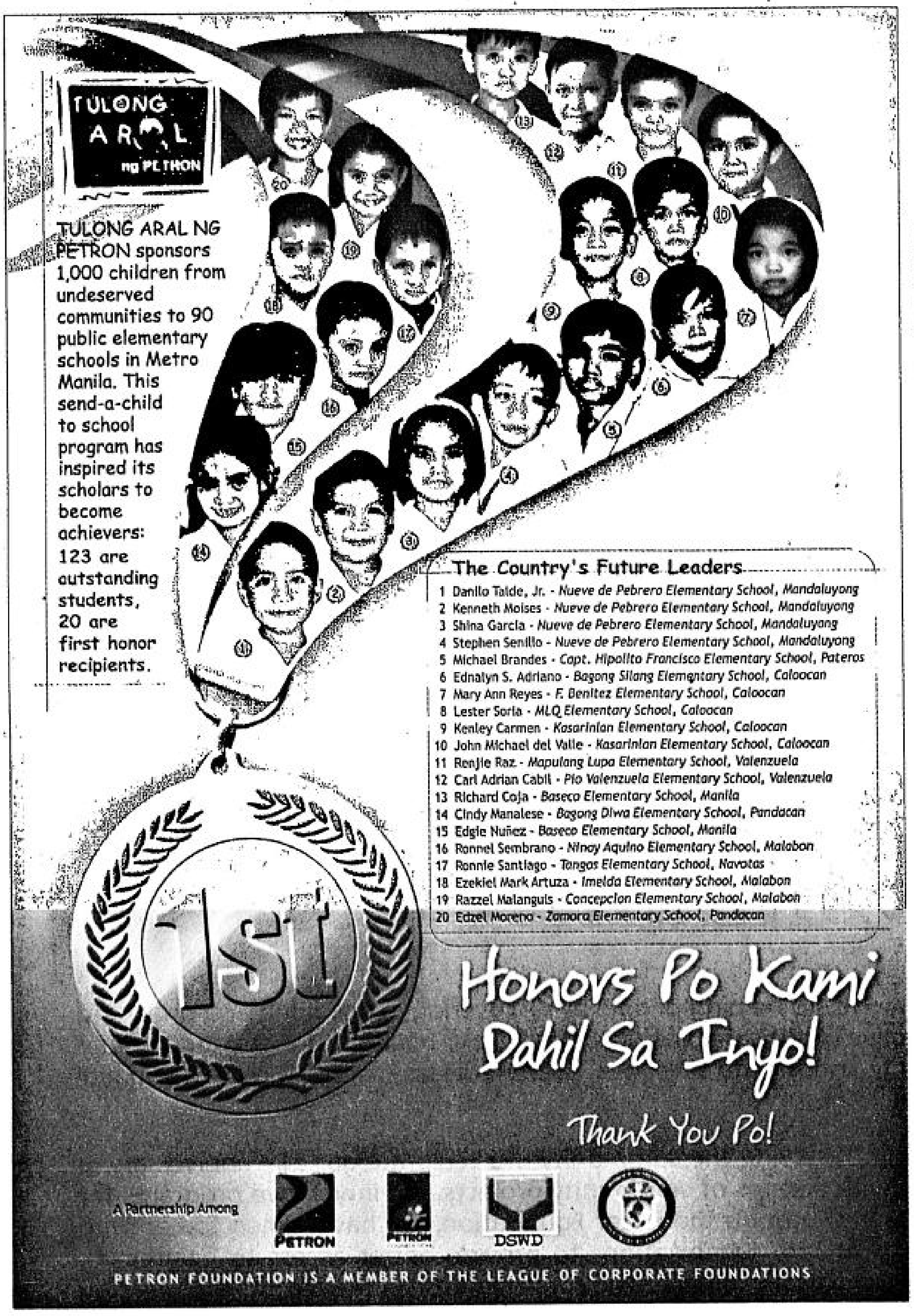

TULONG ARAL NG PETRON sponsors 1,000 children from undeserved communities to 90 public elementary schools in Metro Manila. This send-a-child to school program has inspired its scholars to become achievers: 123 are outstanding students, 20 are first honor recipients.

The Country's Future Leaders

1 Danilo Talde, Jr. - *Nueve de Pebrero Elementary School, Mandaluyong*
2 Kenneth Moises - *Nueve de Pebrero Elementary School, Mandaluyong*
3 Shina Garcia - *Nueve de Pebrero Elementary School, Mandaluyong*
4 Stephen Senillo - *Nueve de Pebrero Elementary School, Mandaluyong*
5 Michael Brandes - *Capt. Hipolito Francisco Elementary School, Pateros*
6 Ednalyn S. Adriano - *Bagong Silang Elementary School, Caloocan*
7 Mary Ann Reyes - *F. Benitez Elementary School, Caloocan*
8 Lester Soria - *MLQ Elementary School, Caloocan*
9 Kenley Carmen - *Kasarinlan Elementary School, Caloocan*
10 John Michael del Valle - *Kasarinlan Elementary School, Caloocan*
11 Renjie Raz - *Mapulang Lupa Elementary School, Valenzuela*
12 Carl Adrian Cabil - *Pio Valenzuela Elementary School, Valenzuela*
13 Richard Coja - *Baseco Elementary School, Manila*
14 Cindy Manalese - *Bagong Diwa Elementary School, Pandacan*
15 Edgie Nuñez - *Baseco Elementary School, Manila*
16 Ronnel Sembrano - *Ninoy Aquino Elementary School, Malabon*
17 Ronnie Santiago - *Tangos Elementary School, Navotas*
18 Ezekiel Mark Artuza - *Imelda Elementary School, Malabon*
19 Razzel Malanguis - *Concepcion Elementary School, Malabon*
20 Edzel Moreno - *Zamora Elementary School, Pandacan*

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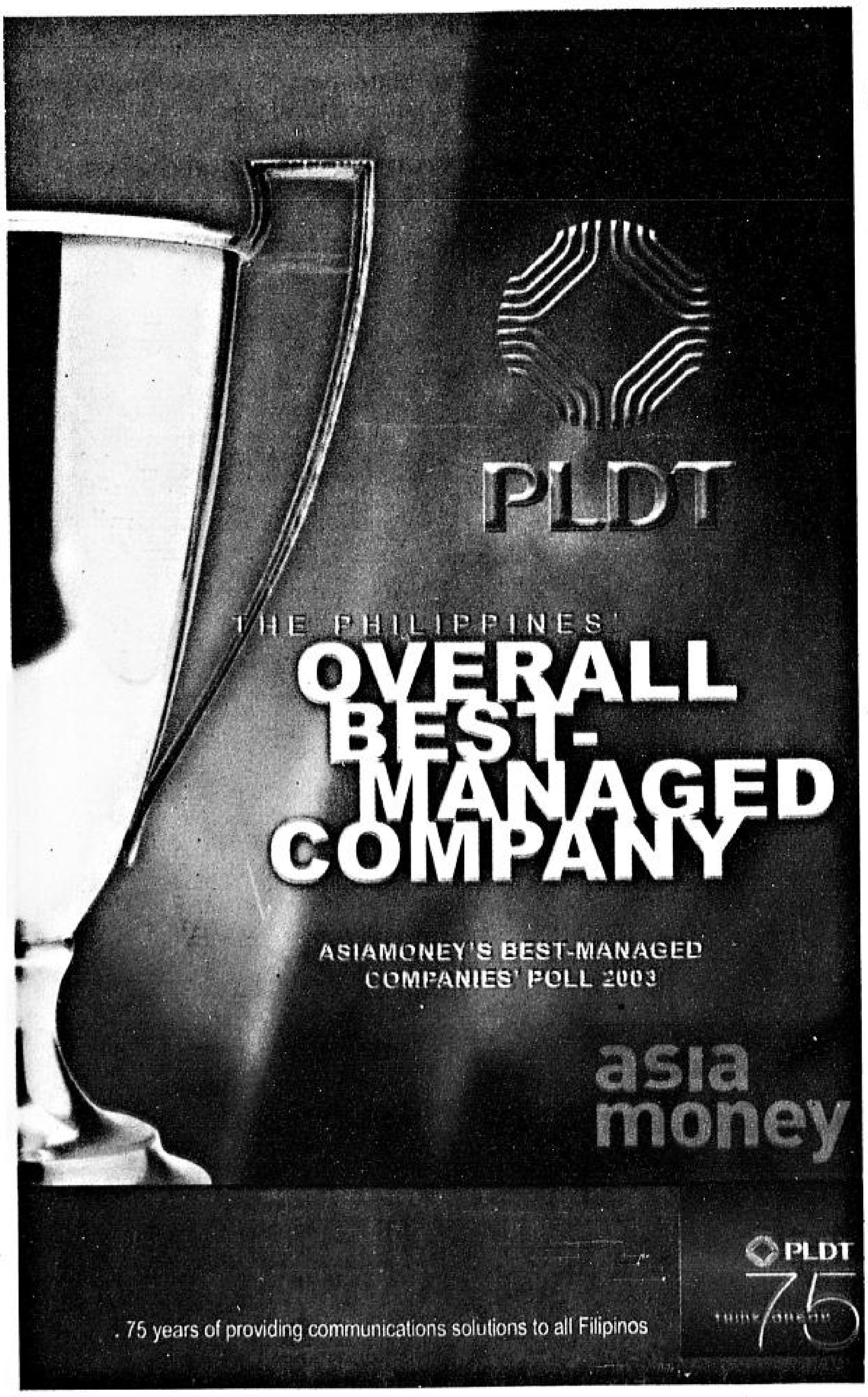
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39th Anvil Award List of Winners

Grand Anvil:	Sitio Agusuhin Development Program Give A Life Now!
Bronze Anvil:	Winning the Fight Against Breast Cancer Photo Exhibit The Aquino-Diokno Memorial
Special Anvil Award:	DLSU System President's Report

Institutional and Corporate PR Programs

Anvil Award of Excellence

Gintong Ilawan: The Teodora Alonso Educator's Award	Avon Cosmetics Inc.
Tulong Aral ng Petron	Petron Foundation
Sustainable Community Development Program	Quezon Power Philippines Ltd. Co.
Sitio Agusuhin Development Program	Shell Philippines Exploration B.V.
Pinoy Healthpass	GlaxoSmithKline Phils.
Petron Caring, Sharing, & Responding	Petron Foundation
The Metrobank Foundation Excellence Awards Program Bringing out and Honoring the Best in the Filipino	Metrobank Foundation
Leaders for Health Project	Pfizer, Department of Health and Atene
Lymphatic Filariasis Eradication Program	GlaxoSmithKline Phils.
Give A Life Now!	Give A Life Charity Foundation
Carbon Sink Initiative Program	Mirant Philippines Corp.

Anvil Award of Merit

The Shell Companies in the Philippines' Health, Safety Security & Environment Program	Shell Philippines Exploration B.V.
Philippine Daily Inquirer's The New Job Market	Philippine Daily Inquirer
ARTPetron 3 Program	Petron Corporation
Cartoon Network Mayor's Award of Excellence	Turner Philippines
Go North Philippines	Office of the President - North Luzon
Pfizer L.I.F.E. Club & SCIENCE of Hypertension Management Program	Pfizer, Inc.
The Randy Diaz Incident: Crisis Communications at Work	Manila Water Company
Project BEACON (Brgy. Electrification Assistance for Countryside Development	Mirant Philippines Corp
The Filipino Entrepreneur. Our Priority. Our Passion	Planters Development Bank
Philippine Daily Inquirer's Youth Readership Program	Philippine Daily Inquirer
Philippine Daily Inquirer's New Paper Drive 2003	Philippine Daily Inquirer
"Wagi Ka Kapuso ... Sa Gawi at Ugali" Campaign	GMA Network, Inc.
Kapuso Corporate Equity	GMA Network, Inc.

Pfizer and Perceptions reap Awards of Excellence for Leaders for Health and Bonamine's Travel Advocacy Campaign and a Merit for its Life and Science Patient Programs

Petron garners three Anvil Awards each in the Tools and Programs Categories

Tools of Publications

Awards of Excellence

Ayala Group of Companies: Unified Annual Reports	Ayala Corporation
DLSU System President's Report	De La Salle University
The SGV Review	SGV & Co.
"Pamilya Ang Tinitibok ng Puso" Value Meal TV Spots	GMA Network, Inc.
SGV Rocks!	SGV & Co.
A Legacy of Heroes	Department of National Defense
WOW Philippines Biyahe Tayo! The Music & Video	Pfizer, Inc.
Winning the Fight Against Breast Cancer Photo Exhibit	Avon Cosmetics
Construction Site: A DLSU-Manila Mechatronics & Robotics Exhibit	De La Salle University

Awards of Merit

Pursuing Our Mandate Under Challenging Times Land Bank 2002 Annual Report	Land Bank of the Philippines
DLSU Magazine: Abut Tanaw	De La Salle University
Dalaw Turo Campaign	Quezon Power Philippines Ltd. Co.
Profiles of Success: Stories of Gawad Pitak Winners	Land Bank of the Philippines
Globe Telecom Zobel & Zen 2003 Calendar	Globe Telecom, Inc
Petron 2003 and 2004 Calendar	Petron Corporation
ARTPetron III Website	Petron Corporation
Alpha-Delta	7th Infantry Philippine Army
Project BEACON: Brgy. Electrification Countryside Development	Mirant Philippines Corporation
Malampaya Website	Shell Philipines Exploration B.V.
ARTPetron III Collaterals	Petron Corporation
Malampaya Interactive Learning CD	Shell Philipines Exploration B.V.
Malampaya Virtual Exhibit	Shell Philipines Exploration B.V.
The Aquino – Diokno Memorial	7th Infantry Philippine Army
DLSU Animo Board	De La Salle University

The Junior Anvils: The Future of PR and Responsible Citizenship

THE FIRST PR Students' Competition is a joint effort of the Public Relations Society of the Philippines (PRSP), the institute for Solidarity in Asia(ISA), and the World Bank Institute(WBI). The cooperation of the three institutions is a recognition of the role of public relations in providing an environment for positive change, promotion of good values, and s strong advocacy for responsible citizenship.

For more than 40 years, the Public Relations Society of the Philippines has been at the forefront of professionalizing the practice of PR and providing the standards for its ethical conduct.

The Institute for Solidarity in Asia is focused on good public governance and the advocacy of responsible citizenship, together with its partner Institute of Corporate Directors, which is focused on governance. ISA is a partner of the World Bank Institute in the promotion, advocacy and reforms towards good governance and responsible citizenship.

PR Students' Competition Jr. Anvil Award First Place Winner: University of the Asia and the Pacific team with their coach Bernard Bagaman

Thus, the Junior Anvils awarded to winners in the First PR Students' Competition is a recognition not just of the skills and the talent of the youth. It is, in a very significant way, PRSP-ISA-WBI's awareness that the future of the country and the world rests on a new generation. It is in the youth's hands that the environment for change and positive reform lies. It is in this new generation that responsible citizens of the Philippines and the world are found.

This is what the Junior Anvil awards stands for. It is a meeting of maturity and experience of seasoned practitioners on one hand and the creative fresh air and enthusiasm of the youth on the other.

PRSP, ISA, and WBI acknowledge the following schools:

Ateneo de Manila University, Lyceum of the Philippines, Miriam College, New Era University, St. Paul College, University of Asia and the Pacific, University of Perpetual Help Rizal and University of the Philippines- Manila

The top three winners:

First Place - University of Asia and the Pacific
Second Place - Ateneo De Manila University
Third Place - New Era University

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